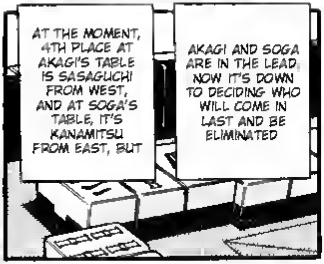
CHAPTER 39
TOO FEW
TILES

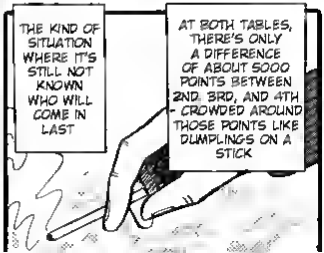
THE EAST-WEST SHOWDOWN

AKAGI AT TABLE "C"
AND SOGA AT TABLE "B"
ARE BOTH CLOSELY MATCHED
EACH TABLE HAS GONE INTO THE SOUTH ROUND - PLUNGING INTO THE FINAL STRETCH
30 MINUTES HAVE PASSED IN THE FIRST GAME, THE SURVIVAL MATCH WHERE THE PERSON IN LAST PLACE IS ELIMINATED

THE ONLY TABLE WHERE EVERYONE IS LOSING IS...
TABLE "A"....!

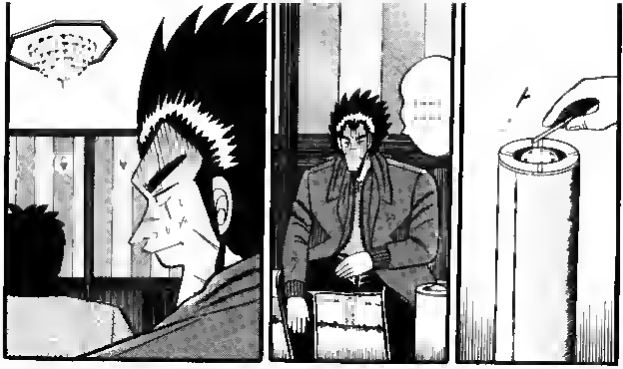
THEY'RE FIGHTING WELL

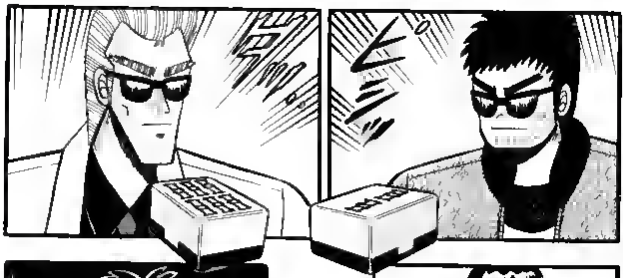

AT THE MOMENT, 4TH PLACE AT AKAGI'S TABLE IS SASAGUCHI FROM WEST, AND AT SOGA'S TABLE, IT'S KANAMITSU FROM EAST, BUT
AKAGI AND SOGA ARE IN THE LEAD. NOW IT'S DOWN TO DECIDING WHO WILL COME IN LAST AND BE ELIMINATED


THE KIND OF SITUATION WHERE IT'S STILL NOT KNOWN WHO WILL COME IN LAST
AT BOTH TABLES, THERE'S ONLY A DIFFERENCE OF ABOUT 5000 POINTS BETWEEN 2ND, 3RD, AND 4TH - CROWDED AROUND THOSE POINTS LIKE DUMPLINGS ON A STICK

THE LEADER OF WEST, HARADA
IS UNSURPASSED.
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE'LL TAKE 4TH PLACE.
HE'S DOWN TO 2000 POINTS
IT HURTS TO SEE HIROYUKI LOOK SO DOWN...
IT WOULDN'T MEAN MUCH TO SAY ANYTHING THIS LATE IN THE GAME BUT...
HE CAN'T TSUMO.
KEN... MIGHT WANT TO TRY SOMETHING IN HIS LAST ROUND AS DEALER, THE SOUTH 3RD, BUT...

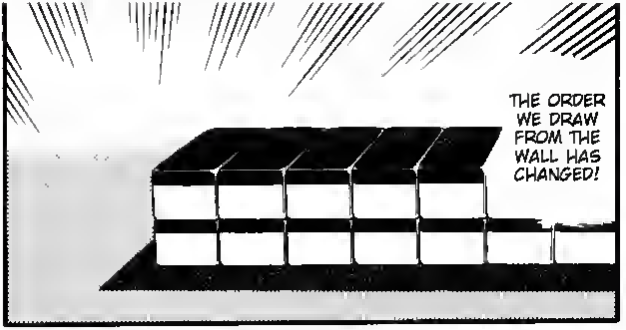
AH ... SORRY ABOUT THAT
IF HE WINS BY TSUMO, THE ONE WITH THE FEWEST POINTS, HIROYUKI, WILL END UP BELOW ZERO
NOTHING HE CAN DO NOW
URGH
IN OTHER WORDS, HIRO HAS TO WIN SOME POINTS
FROM THE POWERFUL TEAM OF HARADA AND NANGOU.
AND HARADA HAS MORE THAN 48000.
ALTHOUGH IT'S GOING TO TAKE A LOT TO DRAG NANGOU DOWN TO 4TH PLACE FROM 2ND, WITH HIS 35000 POINTS
THIS TABLE'S DONE FOR!
IT'S ALREADY BEYOND IMPOSSIBLE TO DO THAT KIND OF THING
IT'S A MESS





5TH TURN-

HIROYUKI NOTICED SOMETHING STRANGE ...


THE ORDER WE DRAW FROM THE WALL HAS CHANGED!

HAS TOO MANY OR TOO FEW TILES IN THEIR HAND...!
SOMEONE HERE...

I SHOULD BE DRAWING FROM THE BOTTOM WALL...!
NOBODY CALLED ON A TILE

URGH!

WHO THE HELL IS IT...?

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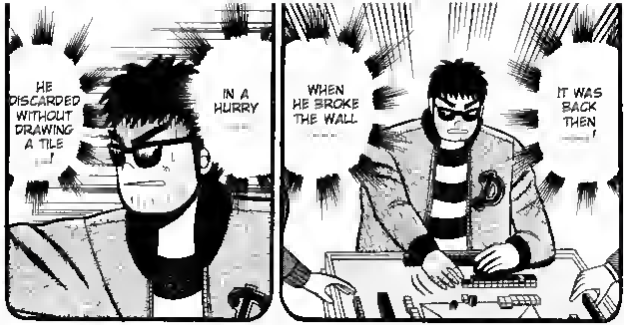
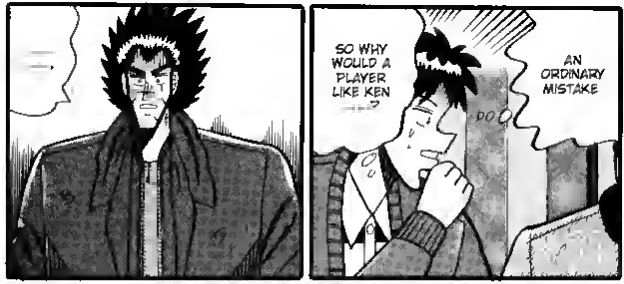
IT'S KEN ...!
OH, I GET IT
BUT WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN ...?
HE REALLY DOES HAVE ONLY 12 TILES


HE DISCARDED WITHOUT DRAWING A TILE!
IN A HURRY
WHEN HE BROKE THE WALL
IT WAS BACK THEN!


SO WHY WOULD A PLAYER LIKE KEN...?
AN ORDINARY MISTAKE

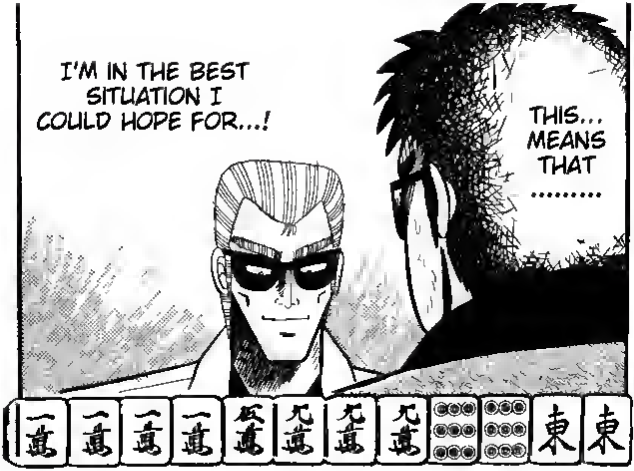
IN FACT, HE WAS WRONG
BUT
THAT SLIM HOPE OF A COMEBACK VICTORY IS GONE NOW TOO
THIS IS THE WORST!
HE'S DUG HIS OWN GRAVE...
OH CRAP...!
FEELING DEFEATED, HE WAS NERVOUS AND OUT OF IT...

PREPARING FOR HIS COMEBACK.
KEN HAD PLANNED TO HAVE TOO FEW TILES
KEN'S HAND

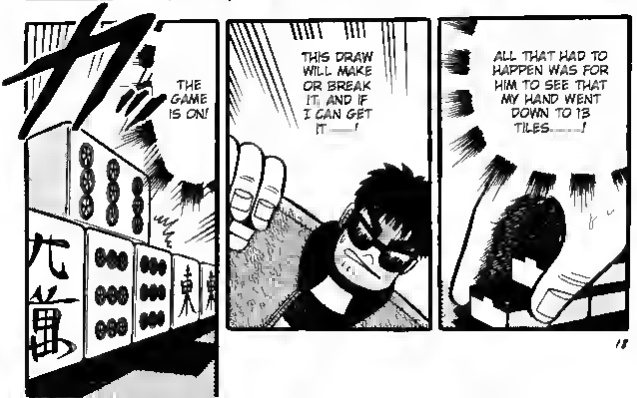
HEH HEH

WHILE IT'S CLEARLY A FOUL
YOU CAN'T STOP THE GAME FOR IT!
AMONG THE RULES OF MAHJONG THERE'S A MYSTERIOUS ARRANGEMENT FOR WHAT'S CALLED "TOO FEW TILES"

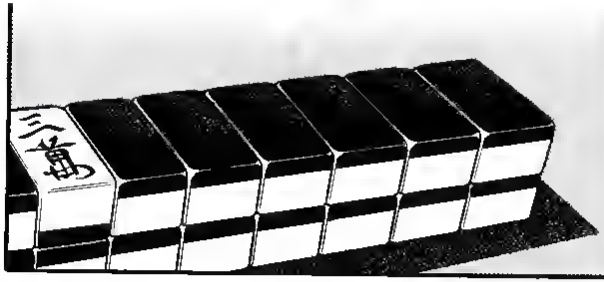
THAT'S MY ADVANTAGE...
YOU JUST GIVE UP ON TRYING TO WIN WITHOUT PAYING ANY PENALTY
A SUBTLE RELIEF MEASURE
ALSO...
BY GIVING UP ON WINNING
IT MEANS THEY DON'T HAVE ME IN THEIR SIGHTS...
NOBODY'S PAYING ATTENTION TO HOW MY HAND IS PROGRESSING...


I'M IN THE BEST SITUATION I COULD HOPE FOR...!
THIS... MEANS THAT .....

WITH A CLEAN GAME FROM THE START...
I NEVER FIGURED I COULD TAKE DOWN HARADA.....


THE GAME IS ON!
THIS DRAW WILL MAKE OR BREAK IT. AND IF I CAN GET IT.....!
ALL THAT HAD TO HAPPEN WAS FOR HIM TO SEE THAT MY HAND WENT DOWN TO 13 TILES.....!

I GOT IT...!
I'LL TAKE HIM OUT!
SUU-AN-KOU, SINGLE WAIT...!
IF I GET A DIRECT HIT WITH A DEALER YAKUMAN, HE'LL GO BELOW ZERO!
THAT 46700 POINTS THAT HARADA HAS NOW-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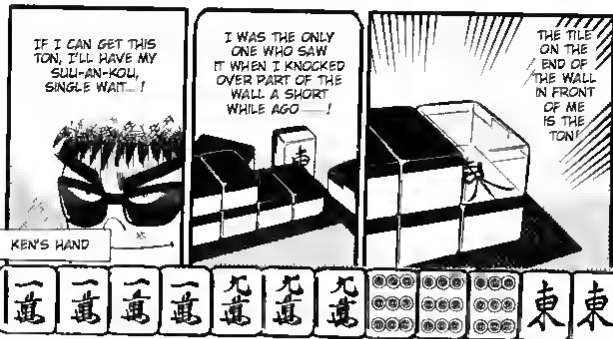
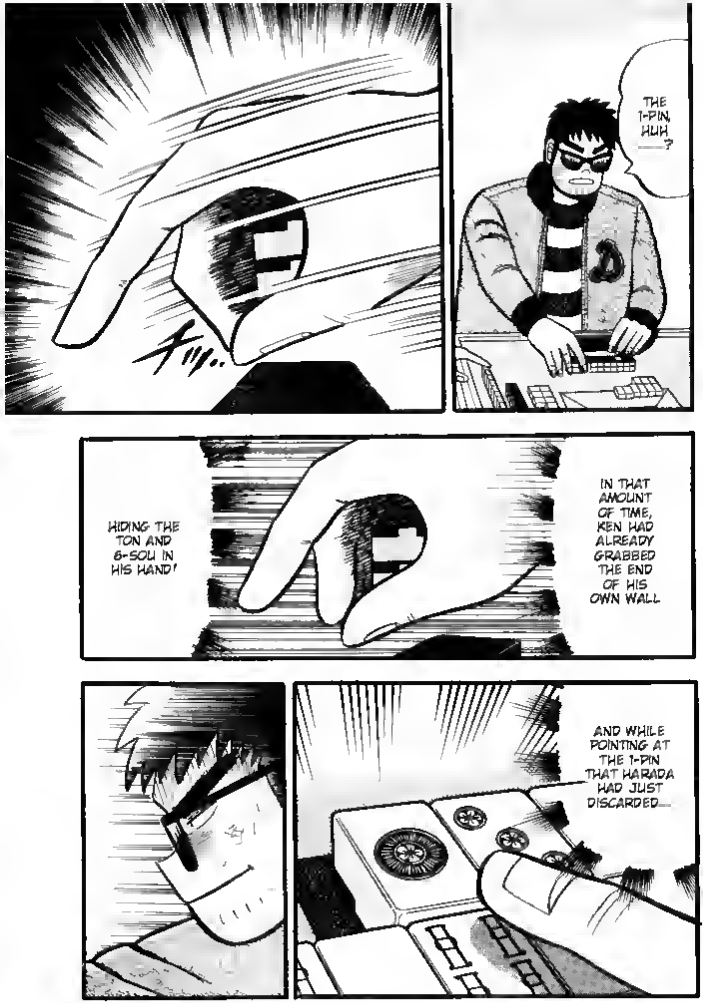
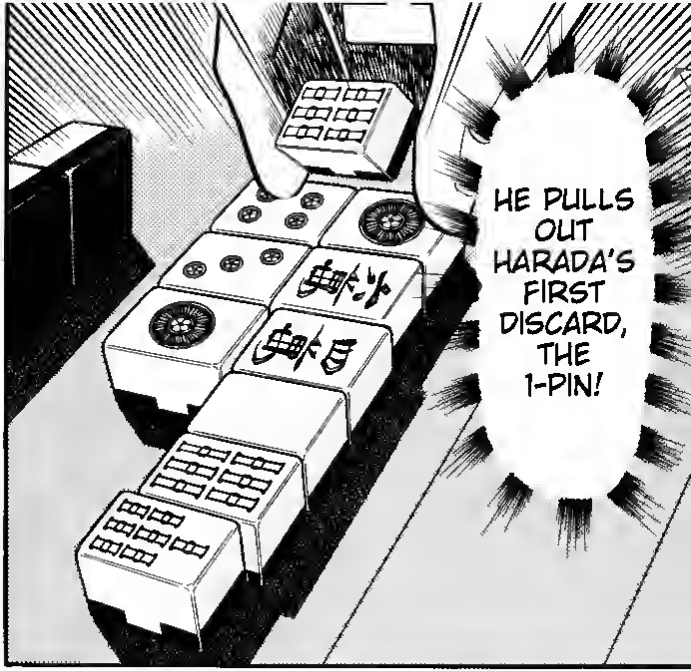
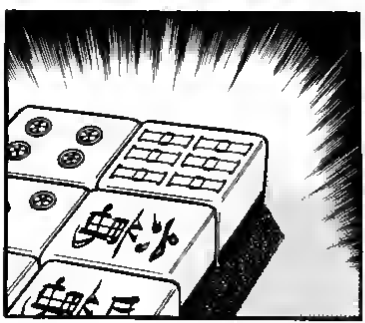
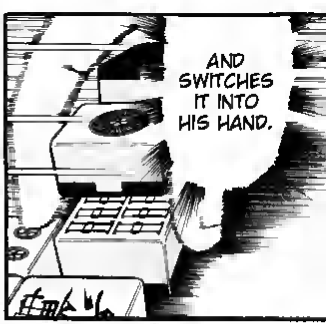

IF I CAN GET THIS TON, I'LL HAVE MY SUU-AN-KOU, SINGLE WAIT——!
KEN'S HAND
I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO SAW IT WHEN I KNOCKED OVER PART OF THE WALL A SHORT WHILE AGO——!
THE TILE ON THE END OF THE WALL IN FRONT OF ME IS THE TON!
一萬 一萬 一萬 一萬 九萬 九萬 九萬 東 東

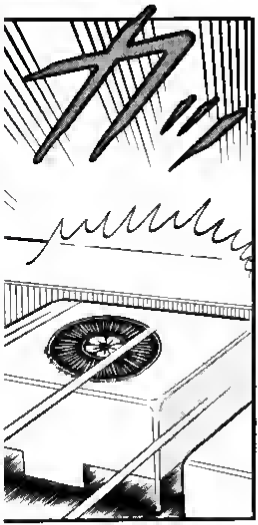
HUH?
EVERYTHING RESTS ON THAT MOMENT!
IN ONE MO-MENT!
BUT TO TAKE OUT THE GENIUS, HARADA, PLAYING SLOWLY WON'T WORK.
一萬 一萬 一萬 一萬 九萬 九萬 九萬 東 東


THE 1-PIN, HUH——?
IN THAT AMOUNT OF TIME, KEN HAD ALREADY GRABBED THE END OF HIS OWN WALL
HIDING THE TON AND 6-SOU IN HIS HAND!
AND WHILE POINTING AT THE 1-PIN THAT HARADA HAD JUST DISCARDED——

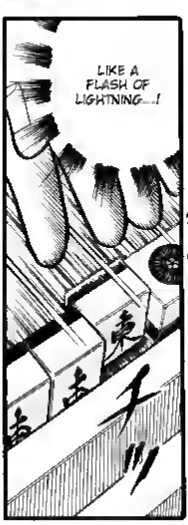

HE PULLS OUT HARADA'S FIRST DISCARD, THE 1-PIN!



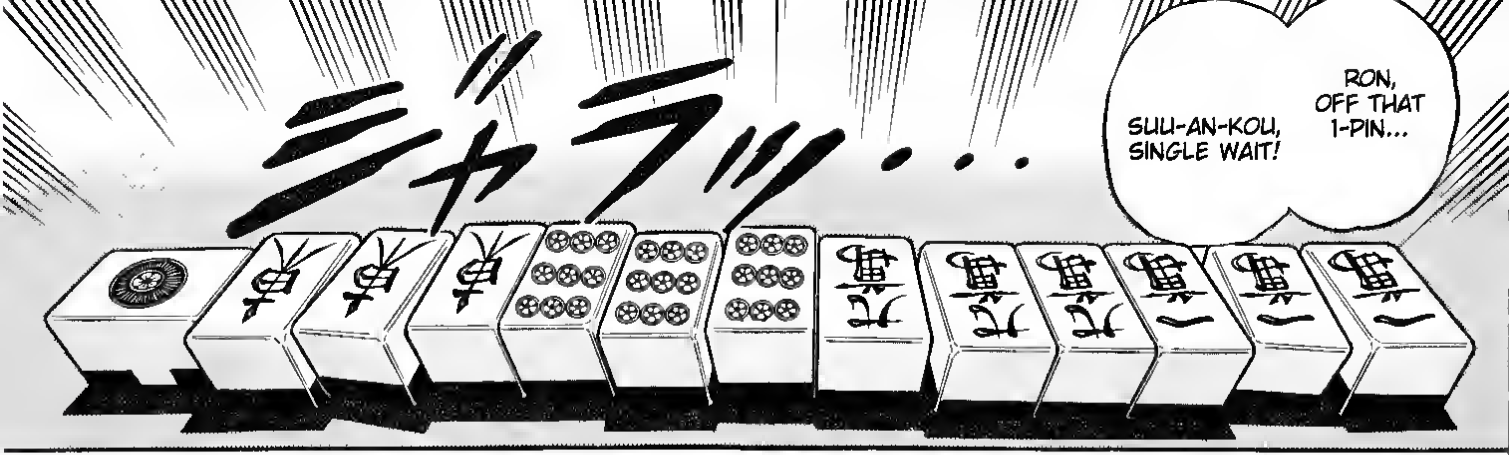

AND SWITCHES IT INTO HIS HAND.

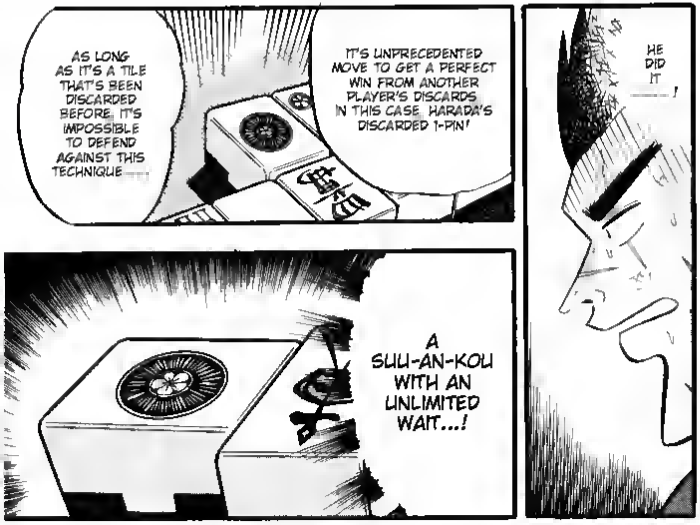


THE TON AND 1-PIN GO INTO HIS HAND!



IT ONLY TOOK ABOUT THREE SECONDS.


ミヤラ…
SUU-AN-KOU, SINGLE WAIT!
RON, OFF THAT 1-PIN...


AS LONG AS IT'S A TILE THAT'S BEEN DISCARDED BEFORE, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFEND AGAINST THIS TECHNIQUE...
IT'S UNPRECEDENTED MOVE TO GET A PERFECT WIN FROM ANOTHER PLAYER'S DISCARDS. IN THIS CASE, HARADA'S DISCARDED 1-PIN!
A SUU-AN-KOU WITH AN UNLIMITED WAIT...!
HE DID IT...!

THAT GUY KEN...!
A COMEBACK VICTORY!

A STAR HAS FALLEN!
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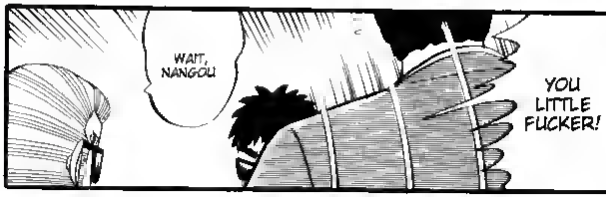
ざわっ
ざわっ
ざわっ
HARADA DEALT INTO A DEALER YAKUMAN...

WHAT THE ---!
THAT'S CRAZY...
HE WENT BELOW ZERO INTO 4TH PLACE IN A MOMENT.
YOU LITTLE SHIT...
ISN'T THAT RIGHT ...?
THIS KID CLEARLY CHEATED.
IT IT CAN'T BE...!
EVERYONE, CALM DOWN.
IT'S OBVIOUS YOU GRABBED TWO TILES FROM YOUR OWN WALL! IT'S NOT SOME LITTLE PRANK YOU'RE PULLING HERE!
THE NUMBER OF TILES ACROSS IN YOUR WALL WENT DOWN FROM 9 TO 8.
NONE OF US AT THIS TABLE SAID ANYTHING, BUT WE ALL KNOW YOU'VE HAD TOO FEW TILES FOR THE LAST FEW TURNS...
DON'T TAKE US ADULTS SO LIGHT-LY...
AND THEN, YOU IMPUDENT LITTLE BRAT

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT .....
HUH..
...


WAIT, NANGOU!
YOU LITTLE FUCKER!

I'LL SETTLE THIS.....
IF ANYBODY'S GOING TO PICK A FIGHT HERE IT'S ME——
QUIET DOWN A BIT...

URGH

I'M GOING TO REMEMBER YOUR NAME
KEN, WASN'T IT?...
IF YOU'RE READY .....!
LET'S SEE WITH OUR OWN EYES...

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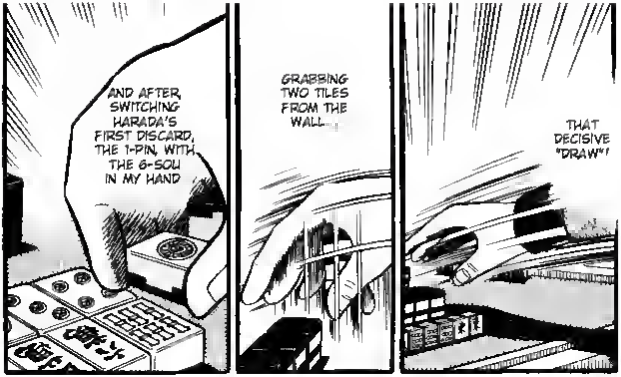
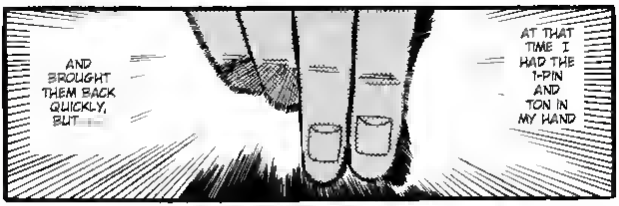
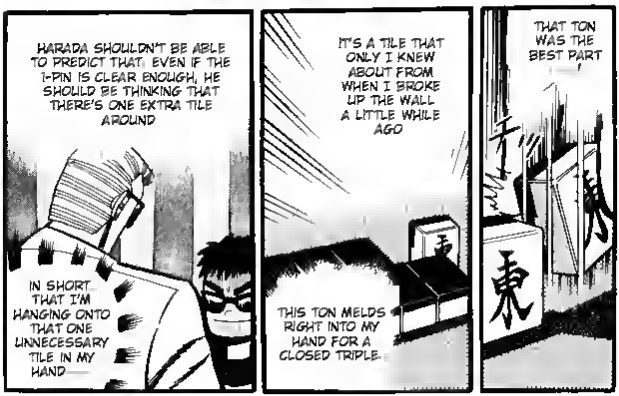
CHAPTER 40
BATTLEFIELD

KEN..... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO -?
IN OTHER WORDS... HE'S STILL HOLDING ONE TILE.....!
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT HE TOOK THEM FROM THERE JUST NOW!
KEN'S WALL IS MISSING TWO TILES

HIROYUKI DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME...
EVERYTHING HAS BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT.
IN THIS GAME TODAY.
THIS IS HOW I PLANNED IT...!
BREAKING THE WALL...
ESPECIALLY THIS LAST ROUND!
AND KEEPING ALL SUSPICIOUS MOVEMENTS TO A MINIMUM AS USUAL...!
HAVING TOO FEW TILES AFTER THAT...


AND AFTER, SWITCHING HARADA'S FIRST DISCARD, THE 1-PIN, WITH THE 6-SOU IN MY HAND
GRABBING TWO TILES FROM THE WALL
THAT DECISIVE "DRAW"!


AND BROUGHT THEM BACK QUICKLY, BUT
AT THAT TIME I HAD THE 1-PIN AND TON IN MY HAND


HARADA SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PREDICT THAT. EVEN IF THE 1-PIN IS CLEAR ENOUGH, HE SHOULD BE THINKING THAT THERE'S ONE EXTRA TILE AROUND
IN SHORT, THAT I'M HANGING ONTO THAT ONE UNNECESSARY TILE IN MY HAND
IT'S A TILE THAT ONLY I KNEW ABOUT FROM WHEN I BROKE UP THE WALL A LITTLE WHILE AGO
THIS TON MELDS RIGHT INTO MY HAND FOR A CLOSED TRIPLE
THAT TON WAS THE BEST PART
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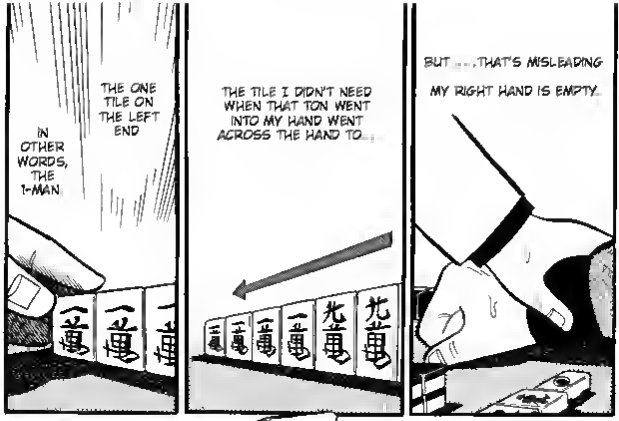
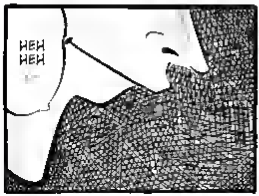

IN OTHER WORDS, THE 1-MAN
THE ONE TILE ON THE LEFT END
THE TILE I DIDN'T NEED WHEN THAT TON WENT INTO MY HAND WENT ACROSS THE HAND TO...
BUT...THAT'S MISLEADING MY RIGHT HAND IS EMPTY.

WHO'D IMAGINE I WAS HANGING ON TO THE TILE I DIDN'T NEED WITH MY LEFT HAND?
WHEN MY LEFT HAND PUSHED DOWN THE TILES, IT JUST BARELY TOUCHED THEM.

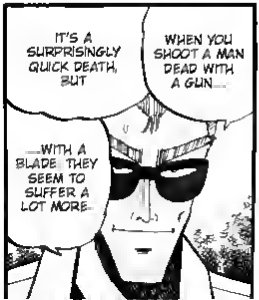
HARADA WILL DESTROY HIMSELF ——!
EVERYTHING IS RESTING ON THIS ——!
THIS IS THE SECRET PLAN FOR A COMEBACK THAT I CAME UP WITH OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS!
GETTING STABBED WILL ERASE ANY EVIDENCE AND I'LL OPEN MY RIGHT HAND TO SHOW IT IS EMPTY.
NOW WHEN HARADA STABS MY RIGHT HAND I CAN FLAIL WILDLY AND MAKE SURE THE 1-MAN GETS MIXED IN WITH THE OTHER TILES ON THE TABLE.

TO TAKE OUT HARADA!
A DESPERATE PLAN


HEH HEH

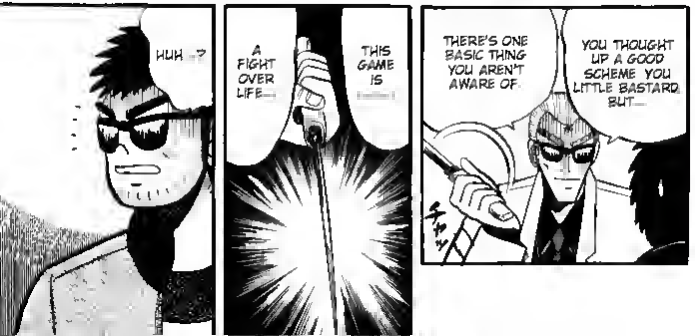
AND YOU'LL GO DOWN WITH IT, YOU ASSHOLE

STAB IT, HARADA! I'LL GIVE YOU ONE HAND...!


IT'S A SURPRISINGLY QUICK DEATH, BUT
WHEN YOU SHOOT A MAN DEAD WITH A GUN...
...WITH A BLADE THEY SEEM TO SUFFER A LOT MORE.

HUH...?

EVEN A MAN WITH A LOT OF COURAGE, LIKE A SAMURAI WILL STILL WRITHE AROUND, AND WON'T DIE A MANLY DEATH
THAT'S WHY THERE WERE ALWAYS ASSISTANTS FOR WHEN A MAN COMMITTED SEPPUKU


HUH...?
A FIGHT OVER LIFE...
THIS GAME IS
THERE'S ONE BASIC THING YOU AREN'T AWARE OF.
YOU THOUGHT UP A GOOD SCHEME YOU LITTLE BASTARD, BUT...

AND TAKE THE TIME TO CHECK THE BODY AFTER
I'LL TAKE THAT MAN'S LIFE FIRST
IF I'M CONFIDENT THAT SOMEONE MESSED WITH THE TILES
URGH
IT'S TOO LATE FOR YOU NOW
HE WOULDN'T KILL ME
HE'S CRAZY

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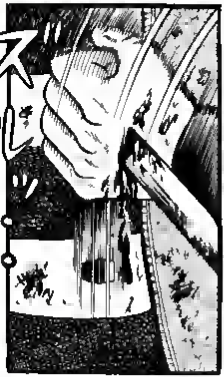
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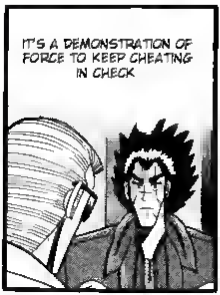
I CAN SEE EVERYTHING YOU'RE THINKING
HEH HEH HEH

AH...!
TOO BAD, HUH
I'M THE LEADER OF WEST!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE EAST-WEST BATTLE NOW!
...EVEN THAT THE ONE REMAINING TILE WAS IN YOUR LEFT HAND...

THE PERSON WHO'S OUT IS YOU...!
4TH PLACE AT THIS TABLE...
HE'D BE DEAD RIGHT NOW...
AND... IF HE HADN'T DONE THAT
AND HE COULDN'T USE HIS RIGHT HAND...
WHEN THE BLADE WENT FOR HIS CHEST
HE COULDN'T HELP BUT MOVE HIS LEFT HAND ON INSTINCT

HAS NO QUALMS ABOUT KILLING ANOTHER MAN!
THIS MAN...


IT'S A DEMONSTRATION OF FORCE TO KEEP CHEATING IN CHECK

UPON SEEING THIS SCENE
THEY CAN'T MAKE A WRONG MOVE.

THESE PLAYERS GATHERED FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SKILLED EVEN AT CHEATING TECHNIQUES

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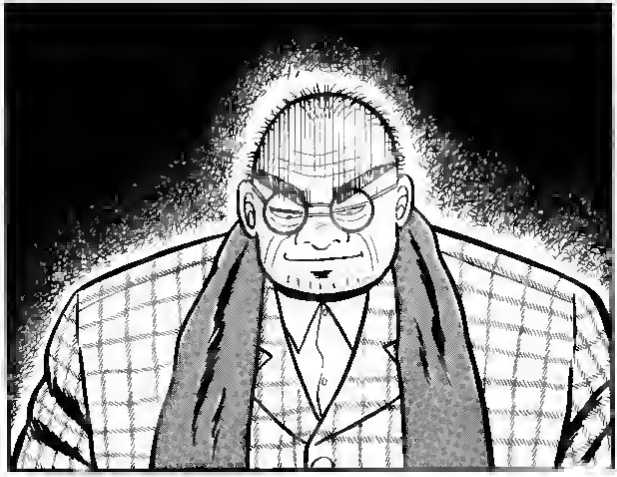
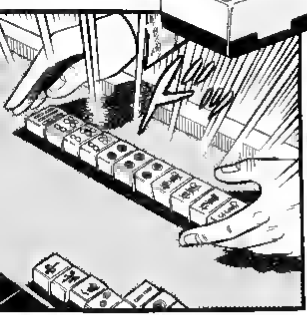
カチャ

TABLE "5"
カチャッ



6-SOU

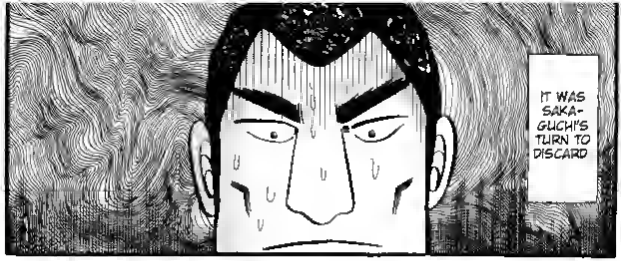
HEH
HEH



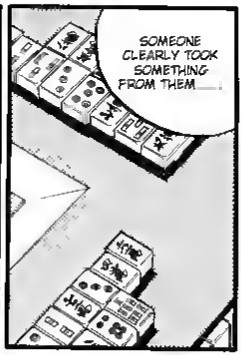
THAT'S THE ONE I NEED
SORRY

SUU-AN-KOU, WAITING ON A SINGLE TILE FOR THE PAIR ...!
URGH
HEH HEH
A REAL SUU-AN-KOU
SORRY BUT
THIS TABLE'S DONE SINCE YOU'RE BELOW ZERO POINTS NOW
HEH HEH.
WELL, THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENS AT THESE GAMES

THAT BASTARD SOGA PICKED UP SOME TILES FROM THE DISCARDS
THE INSTANT I TOOK MY EYES OFF HIM IN THE CONFUSION...
SHIT...
HE GOT ME.....!
ざわ
ざわ
I SHOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING
.....
AKAGI'S TABLE
AND THEN, THE ONLY TABLE LEFT, "C"
ざわっ
AND SO, THE 4TH PLACE FOR TABLES "A" AND "B" WERE SETTLED


IT WAS SAKAGUCHI'S TURN TO DISCARD

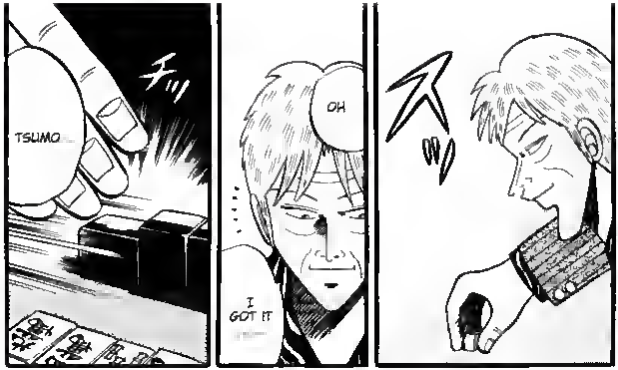
WHO COULD BE COOL-HEADED ENOUGH TO DO THAT IN THE CONFUSION?


SOMEONE CLEARLY TOOK SOMETHING FROM THEM.....

THE DISCARDS ARE A MESS.....
.....

I'LL JUST MATCH EVERYTHING HE DISCARDS
.....IT'S ONLY ONE ROUND

AKAGI SHIGERU!!
THIS MAN.


TSUMO
OH
I GOT IT

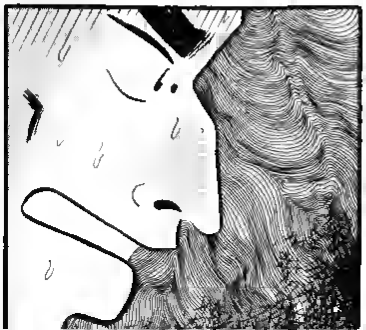
THAT WAS SURIKAE...!
I'M SURE...
ざわ・・・

IT'S A TRIPLE...
I WON'T GO BELOW ZERO YET...
SINCE I'M THE DEALER, I'LL BE THE MOST HURT BY IT BUT
BUT AS LONG AS IT'S TSUMO I'LL MANAGE TO GET BY!
EVEN A YAKUMAN WILL ONLY BE 16000 POINTS.

ピシィッ…！

TRIPLE YAKUMAN, 96000 POINTS
HEH HEH
JUST UNLUCKY, I GUESS
YOU'RE THE DEALER, SO YOU PAY 48000 BRINGING YOU BELOW ZERO

TH-THAT'S CRAZY



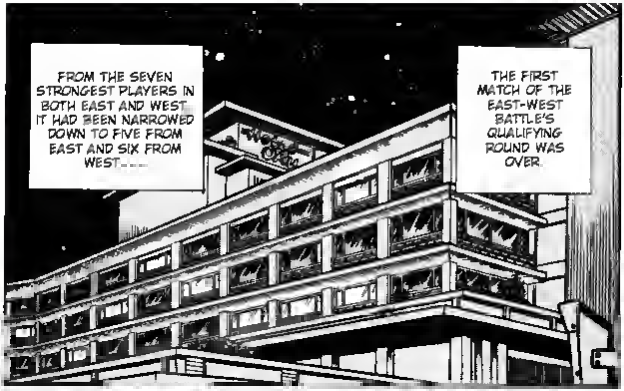
SUU-AN-KOU, TSU-II-SOU, DAI-SAN-GEN ...!

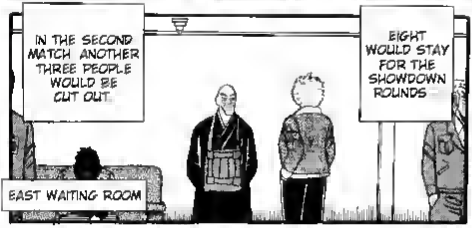
TABLE "C"
4TH PLACE IS SAKAGUCHI FROM WEST.
ざわ..
ざわ..
STRIKING FORWARD IN THAT MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY, ALL THREE TABLES FINISHED ONE AFTER ANOTHER!

IT'S TRUE... THAT THE BEST FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE GATHERED HERE BUT...
THOSE THREE ARE A WHOLE DIFFERENT CLASS
INCRE-DIBLE
WHAT A GAME...
THE REIGNING KING, HARADA!
THE MONSTER, SOGA...!

THE DAZZLING FIGURE THAT STANDS OUT SHARPLY FROM AMONG THE REST
THE DEMONIC GOD, AKAGI SHIGERU

CHAPTER 41
TAKING THE LEAD


FROM THE SEVEN STRONGEST PLAYERS IN BOTH EAST AND WEST, IT HAD BEEN NARROWED DOWN TO FIVE FROM EAST AND SIX FROM WEST.....
THE FIRST MATCH OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE'S QUALIFYING ROUND WAS OVER.

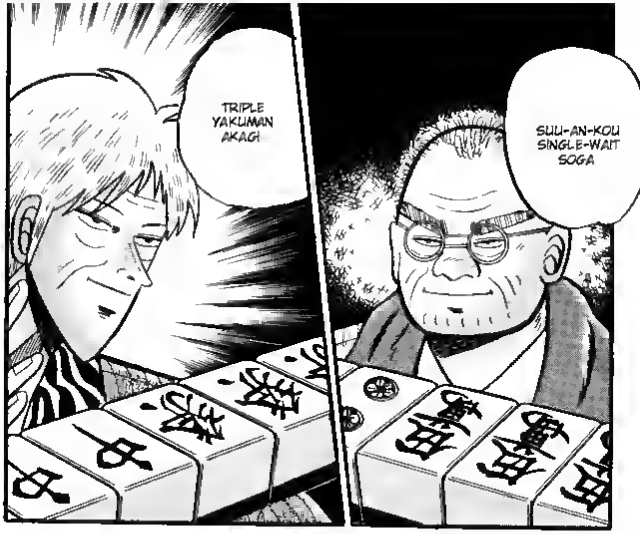

IN THE SECOND MATCH, ANOTHER THREE PEOPLE WOULD BE CUT OUT.
EIGHT WOULD STAY FOR THE SHOWDOWN ROUNDS.
EAST WAITING ROOM

ELEVEN PEOPLE LEFT...!

THIS TILE I WAS HOLDING IS WHAT SAVED MY LIFE...
HOW IRONIC

AND NOW THAT I'VE LOST, I'M TRASH.....
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE I LOST...

YOU JUST TRIED A BIT TOO HARD...
YOU DID WELL.
I WON'T GET ANYWHERE NOW...
DON'T WORRY BOY...
HE PUT UP A FIGHT BEFORE LOSING...
AT LEAST
KEN DID A GOOD JOB...
IN THE END, IT WAS JUST THAT HARADA WAS ONE STEP AHEAD...
YEAH.
AND THE OTHER TWO
HARADA, WHO WOULD MURDER IN COLD BLOOD...
THEY'RE SO DIFFERENT BOTH IN MAHJONG ABILITY AND IN NATURE
BUT... I WASN'T ABLE TO FIGHT VERY WELL...
I'M NOT GOING TO DO WELL IF I'M GLANCING AROUND IN CONFUSION...
I'VE ONLY STAYED IN FOR THE SECOND BATTLE BY PURE LUCK.


TRIPLE YAKUMAN AKAGI
SUU-AN-KOU SINGLE-WAIT SOGA

THINKING THAT SOMEONE WAS GOING TO DIE...
IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT CHAOS

THEIR EYES WERE ON THE TABLE...!
WEREN'T ON THAT
THOSE TWO PEOPLE'S EYES...

SEARCHING
THROUGH THE TILES ON THE TABLE!
WHEN I THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT IT, IT'S ABNORMAL... IT WOULD TAKE NERVES OF STEEL
I MEAN, HARADA WAS WAVING AROUND A BLADE
THERE WAS AN INHUMAN SENSE
OF BEING ENTRANCED
JUST WHAT ARE THEY...
GODS OR DEMONS
ガラッ

WE'VE CONSULTED WITH WEST... NOW...
HERE'S HOW WE'RE GOING TO BE FIGHTING THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE QUALIFYING ROUND...

THE WAY TO PLAY THIS ONE IS CLEAR AND SIMPLE
ざわっ・・・
IT'LL BE BY TAKING THE LEAD...!

YOU WON'T MAKE IT TO THE SHOWDOWN ROUNDS...!
ANYWAY, IF YOU CAN'T COME IN FIRST HERE
WILL HAVE THEIR NAMES ADDED TO THE SHOWDOWN ROUNDS!
AND THREE PEOPLE WILL BE FORCED TO DROP OUT IN THIS ROUND!
FROM HERE ON, THE FIRST EIGHT PEOPLE WHO COME IN FIRST AT THE HAN-CHAN SESSIONS AT EACH TABLE

WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT ONE TABLE HAVING A DISADVANTAGE...
THROUGH A RANDOM DRAW, 3 WILL BE FROM EAST AND 5 FROM WEST
THIS FIRST GAME WILL BE WITH TWO TABLES BUT
SO THEN
FROM AMONG THE REMAINING FIVE PEOPLE, I'LL ANNOUNCE THE THREE PEOPLE GOING INTO THE FIRST GAME...
AND ONE MORE
COMING IN FIRST IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND
OKAY...!
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME...!
SURE
GINJI...
WASHIO...

HIROYUKI!

ザワ.. ザワ.
DO YOUR BEST, YOU THREE.

WHY ME.....?

AND TEN AND AKAGI AREN'T IN THIS SET

I GET IT...
OF COURSE
WAIT...
THIS MEANS THE PERSON WHO WINS WILL BE REMOVED FROM EACH TABLE...
AFTER THAT, ONE PERSON WILL BE ADDED TO THE REMAINING THREE AND THE MATCH WILL START OVER AGAIN
WASHIO AND GINJI AND...
AKAGI AND TEN... HAVE FAITH THAT EVEN IN THE SECOND OR THIRD GAME, THEY CAN TAKE THE LEAD...
UNTIL FINALLY THE THREE PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T COME IN FIRST ARE REMOVED...
ME... A VALUABLE CHANCE...
SO THEY'VE HANDED THE CHANCE IN THE FIRST GAME TO THE OTHERS

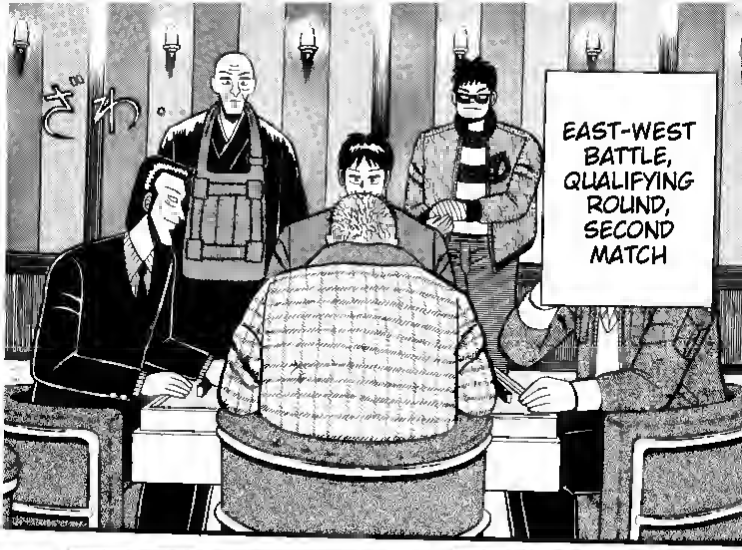

ざわ
EAST-WEST BATTLE, QUALIFYING ROUND, SECOND MATCH

TABLE "A": SOGA, AKUTSU, HIROYUKI, WASHIO

ざわ…
ざわ…

TABLE "B":
HARADA,
NANGOU,
MITSUI,
GINJI

THEIR WAY OF THINKING IS THAT IT'S SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST, AND THE BEST PLAYERS WILL GET THEIR NAMES ON THE LIST...
WEST BROUGHT OUT HARADA AND SOGA FROM THE VERY FIRST BATTLE...
AND THEY HAVE THE NERVE TO KICK US AROUND...
I CAN'T LET MYSELF LOSE...!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THEM HAVE AN EASY TIME OF IT...!
BUT...
PURELY IN TERMS OF MAHJONG ABILITY... THEY SAY HE'S A MONSTER THAT SURPASSES EVEN THE LEADER OF WEST, HARADA
ONE OF THE FOUR BEST, SOGA...
ヒョ～ッ

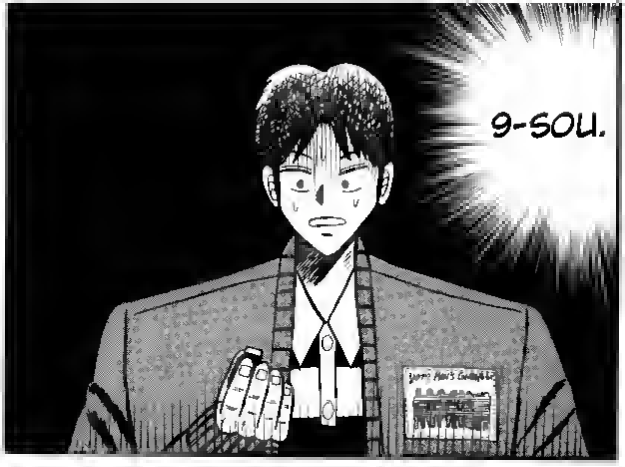
IN A SINGLE HAN-CHAN SESSION...
BUT...
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN ABSOLUTE BEST PLAYER.
HIROYUKI'S HAND
STRAIGHT AHEAD... AND KEEP BUILDING MY HAND
KEEP ON GOING.
IF I CAN RIDE THIS FLOW, EVEN I CAN...
HIROYUKI 6TH TURN
II-SHAN-TEN

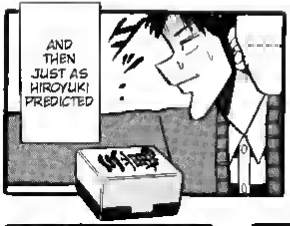
MAYBE THIS WILL DO IT
Ooo
MY DRAWS AND THE FLOW ARE GOOD
I'VE GOT GOOD LUCK
HEY, MONK
MAYBE I CAN GIVE THEM A SHOCK
HUH?
...I SAW ALL OF HIS SECRET.
ANY CLUES TO THE SECRET BEHIND SOGA'S ABILITIES?
WHAT'S HE LIKE?
YOU PLAYED AGAINST SOGA LAST TIME.
YOU SAW IT...?
YEAH.
HUH?

?
THERE'S A REASON THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT
I SAW 90% OF HIS MAIN STRATEGY, THE BASIS AND CAUSE OF SOGA'S STRENGTH.
YEAH, ALTHOUGH SAYING I SAW ALL OF IT MIGHT BE A BIT MUCH
OH
IF YOU WATCH, YOU'LL SEE
BUT
IT'S TOO BAD, BUT THAT'S AS FAR AS HIS HAND WILL GET
? BUT HIROYUKI GOT INTO TENPAI

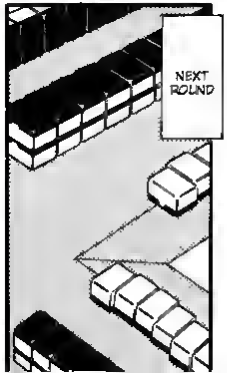
HIROYUKI'S LUCK WILL BE SUCKED AWAY BY SOGA.....
IT'LL BE SUCKED AWAY...
HUH?
MY LUCK, SUCKED AWAY?
RICHI...
SO FAR, MY GOOD DRAWS HAVE BEEN PILING UP BIT BY BIT...
THAT'S CRAZY
RICHI, HUH
チャラ..
AKUTSU'S DISCARDS

I DON'T HAVE THE FLOW THAT WILL MAKE ME DEAL IN
I DON'T HAVE IT...
チュッ
BUT...
HE'S AIMING FOR 8-9-SOU
MY WIN IS PROBABLY RIGHT AHEAD OF ME...
AT A TIME LIKE THIS I SHOULDN'T BE SCARED OF THAT RIICHI


9-SOU.

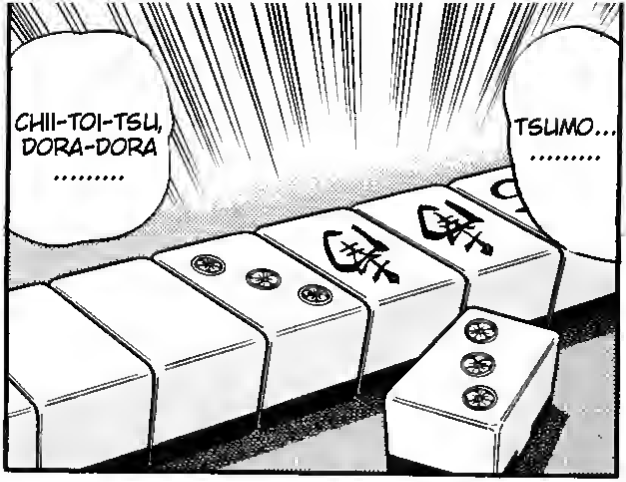

AND THEN JUST AS HIROYUKI PREDICTED

I WONDER WHY I DREW THIS TILE HERE...?
WHAT'S GOING ON...
HUH...?

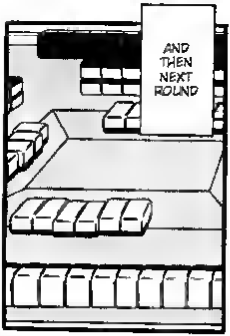

NEXT ROUND

HIS WAIT WAS IN FACT ON THE 6-9-SOU
AKUTSU GOT TSUMO IN THREE TURNS

HIROYUKI RODE THE NATURAL FLOW OF HIS DRAWS TO TENPAI
チラッ…
THE DORA, NAN
AT THAT POINT
AND THEN
I CAN'T DISCARD THIS WHEN SOGA'S HAND STINKS OF CHII-TOI-TSU
SHIT!


CHII-TOI-TSU, DORA-DORA .....
TSUMO... .....

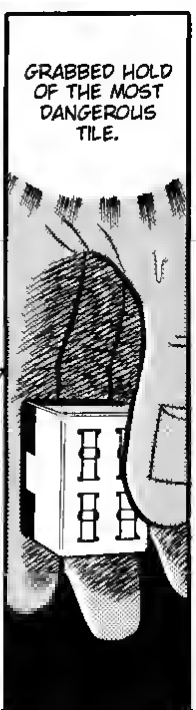
URGH


AND THEN NEXT ROUND

AND— IT FELT LIKE THE FLOW JUST— STOPPED— RIGHT BEFORE MY WIN.
THAT 3-PIN— IF I'D GOTTEN IT, I WOULD HAVE WON——

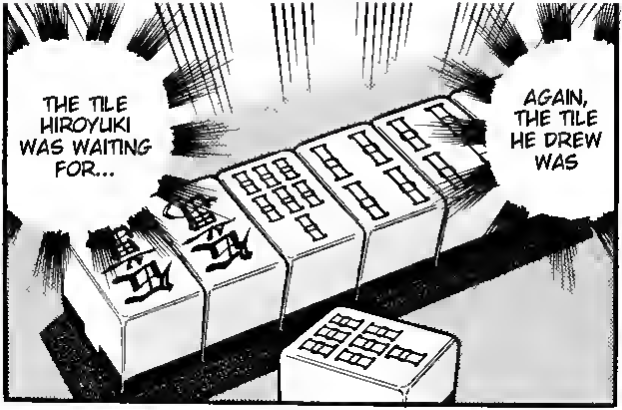
AGAIN IN ONE BLOW...
AFTER GETTING INTO TENPAI, HIROYUKI...

HE AVOIDED BEING WON FROM!
HE COULDN'T CONTINUE HIS HAND WITH THAT TILE...

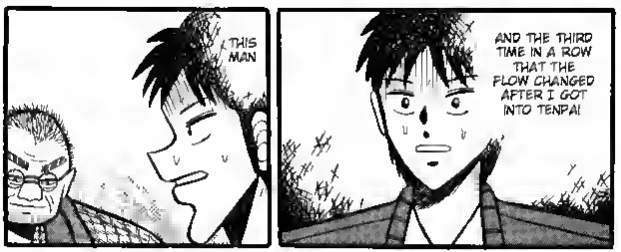

GRABBED HOLD OF THE MOST DANGEROUS TILE.

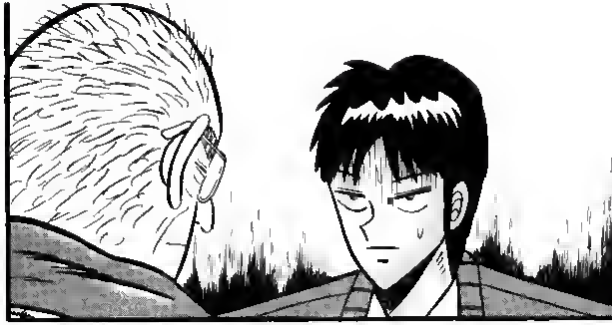
TSUMO!

RIGHT AFTER-WARDS


THE TILE HIROYUKI WAS WAITING FOR...
AGAIN, THE TILE HE DREW WAS

THAT'S THE SECOND TIME THIS PATTERN HAS HAPPENED


THIS MAN
AND THE THIRD TIME IN A ROW THAT THE FLOW CHANGED AFTER I GOT INTO TENPAI



I'M SURE HE'S BEHIND THIS SOMEHOW...

SO HE NOTICED IT.....

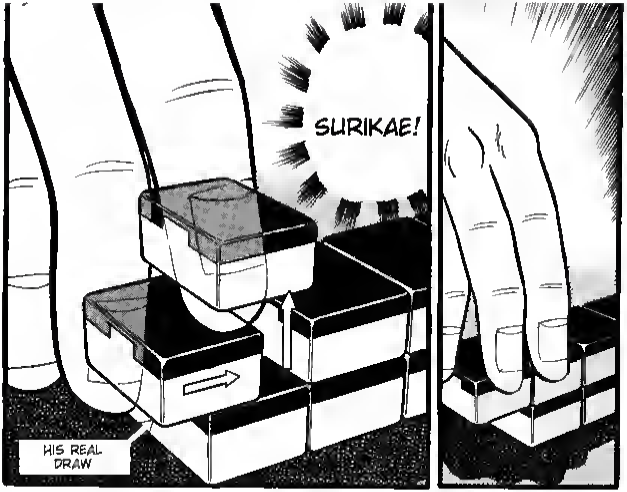
WHAT SOGA IS CONTROL-LING IS

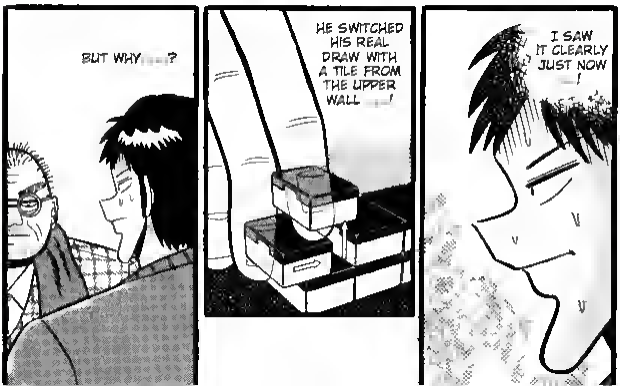
THERE'S NOTHING HE CAN DO.....
BUT... NOW...

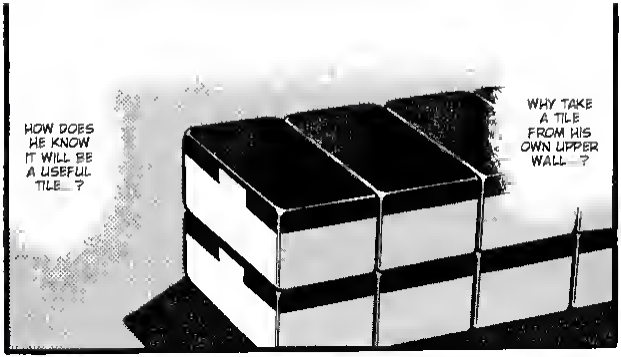
A REALM FORBIDDEN TO THE AVERAGE PERSON.
THE DARKNESS OF MAHJONG.

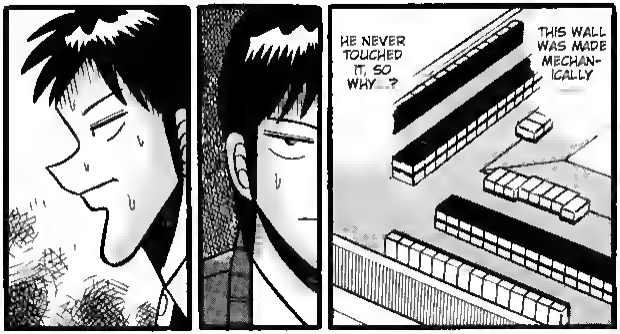
CHAPTER 42
PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS

THE THING THAT SOGA WAS CONTROLLING .....
SOGA'S TURN TO DRAW
THE SECRET TO SOGA'S STRENGTH IS...
FIRST OF ALL, IN HIS HANDS...
IT LOOKS LIKE HIROYUKI
SEEMS TO HAVE NOTICED IT TOO
HAD AWAKENED ... IN THE DARKNESS OF MAHJONG.


SURIKAE!
HIS REAL DRAW


BUT WHY...?
HE SWITCHED HIS REAL DRAW WITH A TILE FROM THE UPPER WALL...!
I SAW IT CLEARLY JUST NOW...!


HOW DOES HE KNOW IT WILL BE A USEFUL TILE...?
WHY TAKE A TILE FROM HIS OWN UPPER WALL...?


HE NEVER TOUCHED IT, SO WHY...?
THIS WALL WAS MADE MECHANICALLY

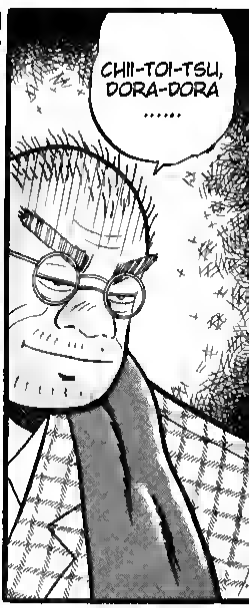
ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE BEST TILE FOR HIMSELF... HE CAN PICK THE BEST TILE BY ADDING TWO TILES FROM THE UPPER WALL TO HIS PRESENT DRAW...
I CAN, AS FAR THE THE RESULT GOES
BUT...
I CAN'T EVEN GUESS...

HIS HAND WILL ADVANCE QUICKLY
FIRST, HE CAN ELIMINATE ANY TILES HE FEELS ARE USELESS!
YOU COULD THINK OF IT AS A SMALL THING BUT
IT'S EASY TO IMAGINE THAT HE CAN ADVANCE HIS HAND THREE TIMES FASTER THAN OTHER PLAYERS
SINCE HE CAN CHOOSE FROM THREE TILES
THIS IS ACTUALLY WHAT BRINGS ABOUT HIS OVERWHELMING DOMINATION OF THE GAME!
FOR INSTANCE, IF HE SHIFTS ONE TILE OVER ON THE UPPER WALL, THAT TILE WILL GO TO THE PLAYER ACROSS FROM HIM.
ALL HE HAS TO DO IS NOT DRAW THE TILES HE DOESN'T WANT
AND HE HAS NO WORRIES ABOUT DEALING IN TO OTHER PLAYERS' HANDS EITHER.
HIS ACTUAL DRAW
RIICHI.
THREE TIMES FASTER IN HIS SPEED TOWARDS TENPAI AND THREE TIMES THE CHANCE OF GETTING IPPATSU TSUMO AND A DEALING-IN RATE OF ZERO.
MAKING IT SO THAT I DRAW DANGEROUS TILES AND SO ON
IS SIMPLE

HE CAN'T LOSE.....!
THE TEN YEAR STREAK WITHOUT A SINGLE LOSS THAT SOGA MITSUI CARVED OUT FOR HIMSELF..... .....ISN'T IMPOSSIBLE.

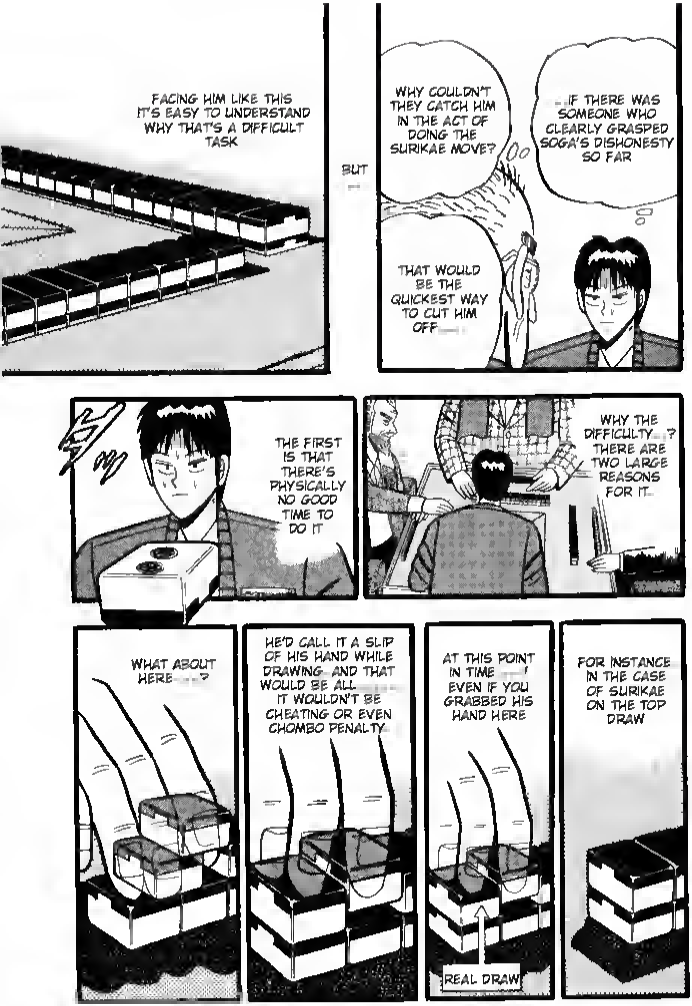
IPPATSU, TSUMO.

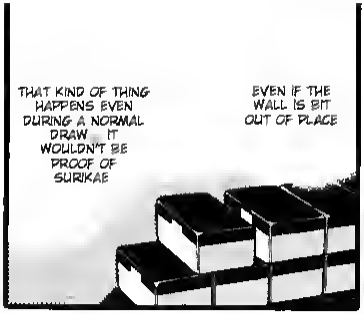
.....


CHII-TOI-TSU, DORA-DORA .....

ナニ

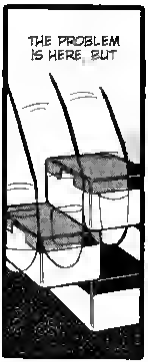
I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS IT'S MYSTERIOUS


FACING HIM LIKE THIS IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY THAT'S A DIFFICULT TASK
BUT...
WHY COULDN'T THEY CATCH HIM IN THE ACT OF DOING THE SURIKAE MOVE?
...IF THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO CLEARLY GRASPED SOGA'S DISHONESTY SO FAR
THAT WOULD BE THE QUICKEST WAY TO CUT HIM OFF...
THE FIRST IS THAT THERE'S PHYSICALLY NO GOOD TIME TO DO IT
WHY THE DIFFICULTY...? THERE ARE TWO LARGE REASONS FOR IT...
WHAT ABOUT HERE...?
HE'D CALL IT A SLIP OF HIS HAND WHILE DRAWING AND THAT WOULD BE ALL IT WOULDN'T BE CHEATING OR EVEN CHOMBO PENALTY
AT THIS POINT IN TIME... EVEN IF YOU GRABBED HIS HAND HERE
REAL DRAW
FOR INSTANCE IN THE CASE OF SURIKAE ON THE TOP DRAW

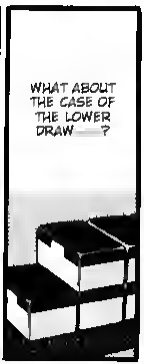

THAT KIND OF THING HAPPENS EVEN DURING A NORMAL DRAW... IT WOULDN'T BE PROOF OF SURIKAE
EVEN IF THE WALL IS BIT OUT OF PLACE

HE'S ALREADY FINISHED...
BY HERE IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE

EVEN IF HE'S TOUCHING BOTH TILES... THEY'RE NEVER IN HIS HAND AT THE SAME TIME...
EVEN IF YOU GRABBED SOGA'S HAND IN THAT INSTANT


THE PROBLEM IS HERE, BUT

AT THIS POINT IT'S NO DIFFERENT FROM A NORMAL DRAW...


WHAT ABOUT THE CASE OF THE LOWER DRAW.....?

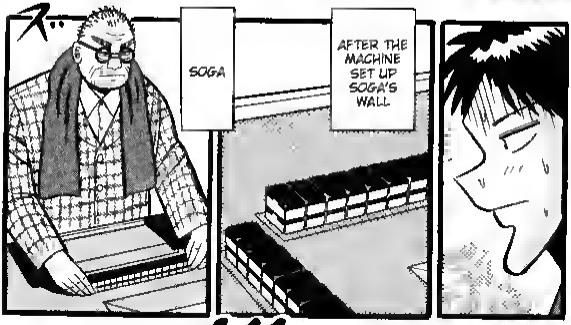
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO.
THIS ALSO CAN HAPPEN A LOT IN A NORMAL DRAW. BUT HE COULD EXPLAIN IT AS THE SHOCK OF HAVING HIS HAND GRABBED.
THERE'S NO PROOF OF SURIKAE

IF ONE TILE FELL OFF THE WALL

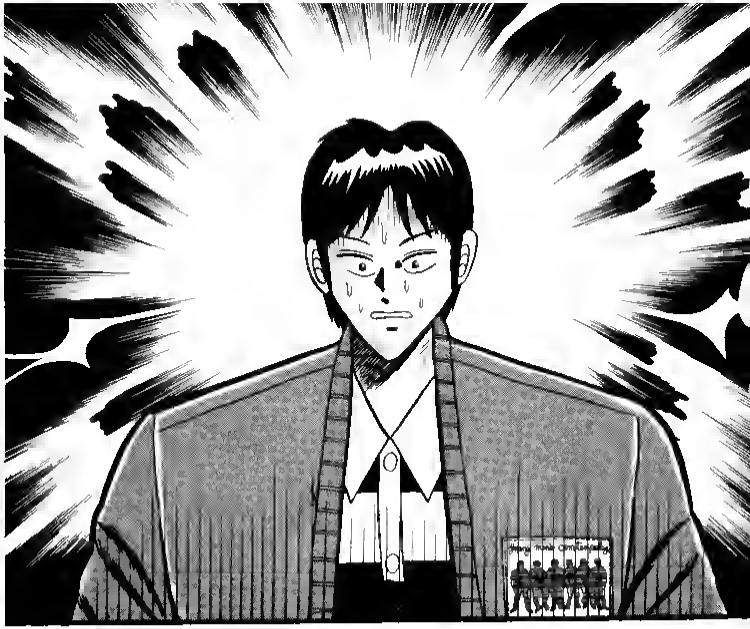
WHICH TILE IS THE ONE IN HIS HAND?

THE CRUCIAL THING IS... A MUCH MORE FUNDAMENTAL REASON THAN THAT.
AND THEN, ON TOP OF THAT
THERE IS NO MOMENT WHERE THE TWO TILES ARE CLEARLY IN SOGA'S HAND...!
THIS IS THE ONE PHYSICAL REASON.
INEVITABLY
WHY...? WHY DO SURIKAE FOR TILES HE CAN'T POSSIBLY KNOW? THIS MEANS THAT
WE'D BE THE ONES AT A LOSS FOR WORDS...!
IF SOGA CALLED US OUT AS TO WHY HE'D EVER HAVE TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
NOBODY CAN STOP HIM.
THIS SURIKAE IS SUPPORTED BY SOMETHING LIKE AN IMPOSSIBL-TO-PROVE PREDICTION BY SOGA...
THERE'S NO BASIS FOR IT
11'9..

BUT... IN THE SOUTH 1ST ROUND

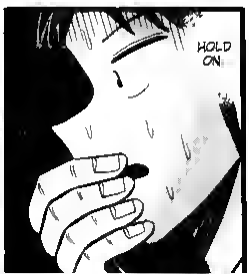

SOGA
AFTER THE MACHINE SET UP SOGA'S WALL
HIROYUKI HAD A SUDDEN THOUGHT

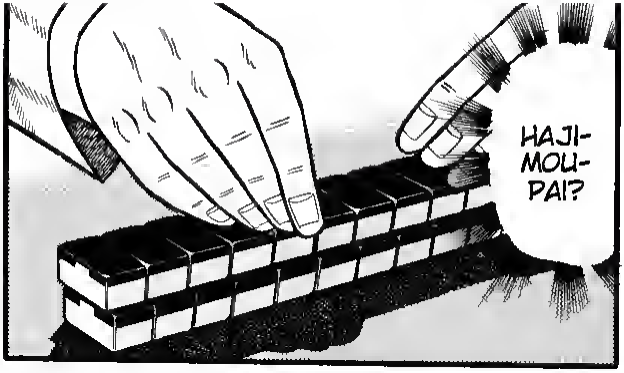
ガ!!!



COULD IT BE
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A HABIT OF HIS, BUT

THAT MOVEMENT OF HIS HAND AFTER HE PUSHED HIS WALL OUT IN FRONT OF HIM.


HOLD ON.


HAJI-
MOU-
PAI?

THAT I
COULD
FIGURE
OUT
THAT
WAY
EVEN I CAN
THINK OF A
FEW TILES

BY FEELING
ACROSS THE
BOTTOM END OF
THEM WITH THE PAD
OF HIS THUMB...?
IN THAT
MOMENT,
DID HE
READ ALL
THE TILES
IN HIS OWN
WALL

WHEN I THINK
ABOUT IT LIKE
THAT... IT
ANSWERS
A LOT OF THE
PROBLEMS
WITH THIS!

SO THAT'S IT...
I GET IT NOW...

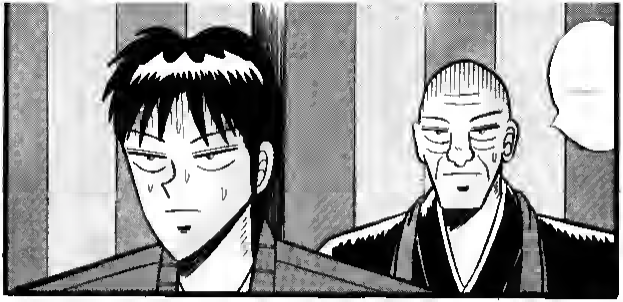
YEAH... FOR INSTANCE, IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH DRAWING FROM THE UPPER OR LOWER WALL.
キュッ!
THE TILE HE DID SURIKAE FOR WAS ALWAYS FROM THE UPPER WALL.
REALLY, WHETHER OR NOT HE GOT USEFUL TILES WAS SOMETHING ONLY SOGA WOULD KNOW.
YOU CAN THINK OF THAT AS A TYPE OF CAMOUFLAGE.
SURE, HE CAN DO THAT FOR OTHER PLAYER'S WALLS TOO, BUT
SOMEHOW, I HAD A FEELING HE DID SURIKAE A LOT ON HIS OWN WALL
MAYBE WE'RE ONLY THINKING HE WAS GETTING USEFUL TILES.

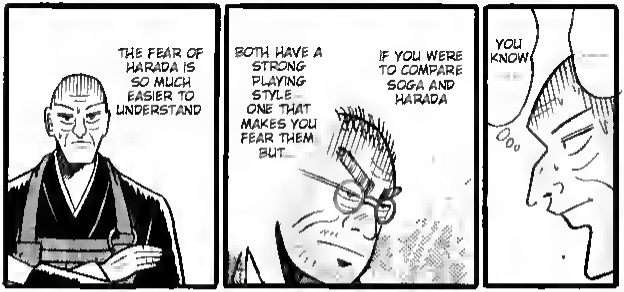
IT WAS MOSTLY USED UP WITH THE STARTING HANDS...!
FORTUNATELY THIS TIME THERE'S NOT MUCH OF SOGA'S WALL LEFT...!
PON .....!
I SEE .....
SOGA'S ONLY HUMAN .....
BEYOND THAT.....
WE JUST HAVE TO MAKE IT SO THAT SOGA CAN'T DRAW FROM HIS OWN WALL

GOOD ONE, WASHIO
PON.
Hm...
SOGA'S ADVANTAGE WILL VANISH.
IF WE CAN JUST WHITTLE AWAY AT THAT WALL
THE SO-CALLED REALM OF DARKNESS
NOBODY KNOWS WHAT WILL BE COMING NEXT, AFTER THAT...
A REAL GAME OF MAHJONG FOR THE FIRST TIME
IT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION THAT HE'D BE ABLE TO KNOW THE TILES THAT WILL BE DRAWN PAST THERE AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PREDICTION.

THE CRUCIAL CONDITIONS ARE JUST THAT DIFFERENT.
IT'S LIKE SOGA IS BOXING AGAINST A BLIND OPPONENT.
IF SOGA'S THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHAT HE CAN CHOOSE FROM
IT'S JUST A JOKE.
IF DARKNESS ISN'T DARKNESS TO EVERYONE
SOGA'S SURIKAE CONTINUED
PAST HIS OWN WALL
BUT

SOWING THE SEEDS OF DOUBT IN OUR MINDS
HE'S JUST PRETENDING HE KNOWS
THAT'S SOGA'S TRICK
IT'S A BLUFF
HE WONT BE ABLE TO KNOW THEM AS IF IT'S SOME KIND OF PREDICTION
THE TILES THAT HE DRAWS AFTER THIS
NO... IT CAN'T HAPPEN!
THERE'S NO WAY THAT KIND OF THING WILL HAPPEN
ﾈｭｰﾝ

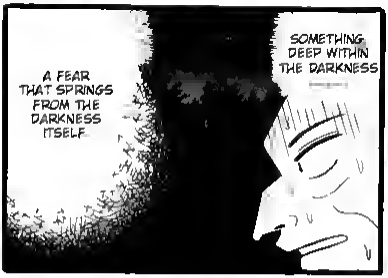



THE FEAR OF HARADA IS SO MUCH EASIER TO UNDERSTAND
BOTH HAVE A STRONG PLAYING STYLE ONE THAT MAKES YOU FEAR THEM BUT...
IF YOU WERE TO COMPARE SOGA AND HARADA
YOU KNOW...

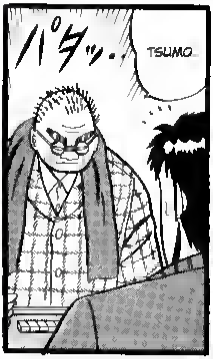
THAT IS THE IMAGE OF FEAR THAT HARADA KATSUMI GENERATES
A MAN THAT WOULD SWING IT DOWN BRUTALLY
IT'S LIKE THE BARED BLADE OF A JAPANESE KATANA...

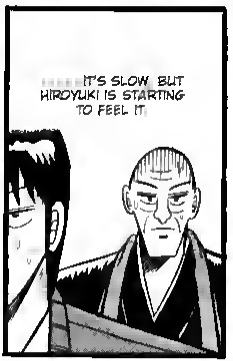
BUT..
SOGA IS DIFFERENT
YOU CAN DEAL WITH A FEAR THAT YOU CAN SEE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.
TRUE, IT'S FRIGHTENING BUT...
AN EERIE FEELING...
FEAR OF SOGA HAS A DIFFERENT QUALITY...
THE FEELING OF SOMEONE BEHIND YOU .....
WALKING DEEP IN THE FOREST ... AT NIGHT
FOR INSTANCE
YOU FEEL A HINT OF IT, JUST FOR A MOMENT...

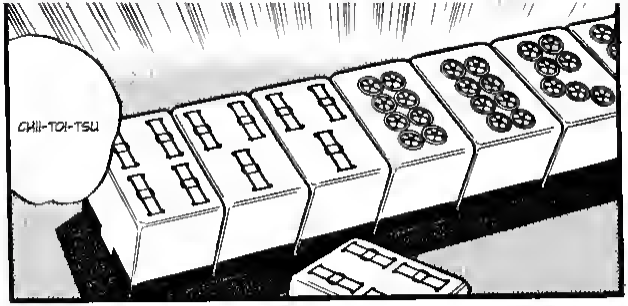
BUT YOU TURN AROUND, AND NOBODY'S THERE.

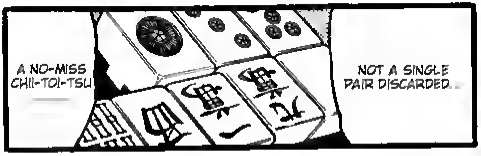

A FEAR THAT SPRINGS FROM THE DARKNESS ITSELF.
SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN THE DARKNESS

SOME-THING IS THERE
BUT, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT IN THAT DARKNESS


パタッ.
TSUMO.


IT'S SLOW. BUT HIROYUKI IS STARTING TO FEEL IT.

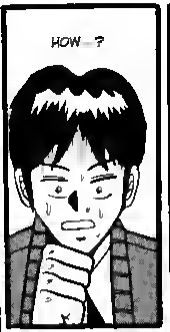

CHII-TOI-TSU


A NO-MISS CHII-TOI-TSU
NOT A SINGLE PAIR DISCARDED

URGH

HE NEVER MADE A WRONG MOVE
HIS UPPER-WALL SURIKAE DIDN'T FAIL HIM
WHICH MEANS THAT EVEN PAST HIS OWN WALL

HOW.....?


HOW...?

SOGA WAS WITHIN THE PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS OF THE DEEP FOREST.
AND, STILL, THERE WAS NOBODY WHO COULD SEE THROUGH THAT DARKNESS.....

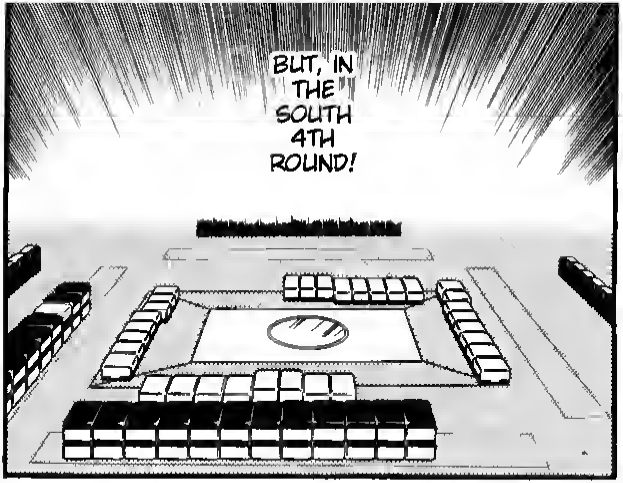
CHAPTER 43
WEST'S STRATEGY

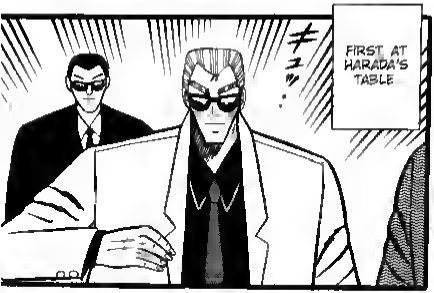
SECOND QUALIFYING ROUND IN THE EAST-WEST BATTLE A GAME OF TAKING THE LEAD
THE MATCH ADVANCES WITH WEST DOMINATING THE FIELD FROM START TO FINISH
IN THE SOUTH 3RD ROUND
IN THE LEAD AT TABLE "A" WAS SOGA FROM WEST
AND TABLE "B" WAS HARADA
.....

.....
Ooo

NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT PART...
HARADA AND SOGA WILL WIN
IN THIS GAME OF TAKING THE LEAD...

THE REAL MATCH WILL START AFTER THIS HAN-CHAN...!
AFTER THOSE TWO ARE OUT, IT'LL BE A FAIRLY EASY GAME FOR EAST NEXT TIME...
BUT WHEN YOU LOOK AT THEIR OTHER ALLIES...
THOSE TWO HAVE BEEN EXCEPTIONAL FROM THE START...


BUT, IN THE SOUTH 4TH ROUND!


FIRST AT HARADA'S TABLE
ﾈｭｰ

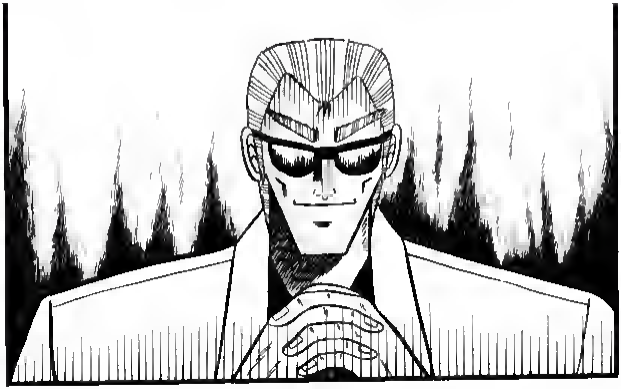
SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED IN THAT LAST ROUND

RON!
BAIMAN...!
BA...
JUN-CHAN, SAN-SHOKU, 3 DORA: BAIMAN.
THAT MAKES IT A COMEBACK VICTORY!

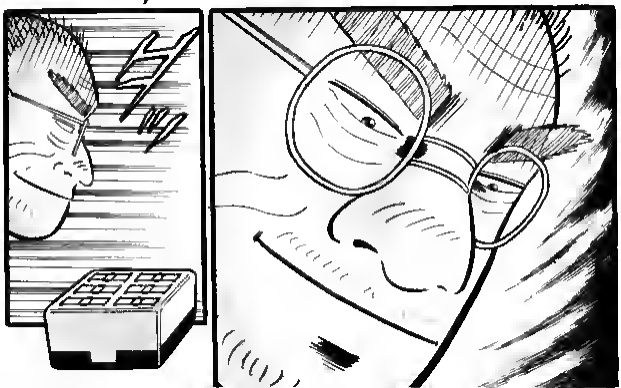
MITSUI FROM WEST TAKES THE LEAD...!
HE MOVED INTO THE LEAD AT TABLE "B" AT THE LAST MOMENT .....!

WHAT ..?

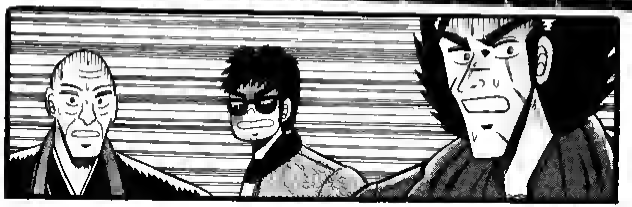
HUH .?

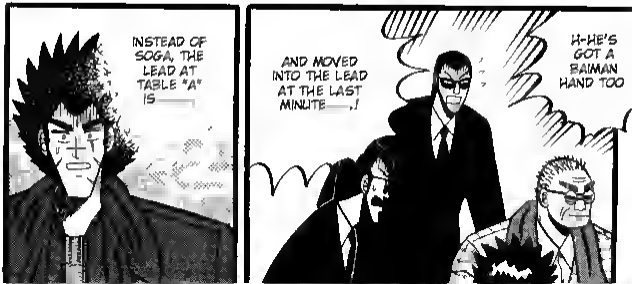


I CAN'T BELIEVE IT THAT HE'D BE SO CARELESS WITH A TEAM-MATE.....
HE STOLE THE LEAD FROM HARADA AT THE LAST MINUTE.....?

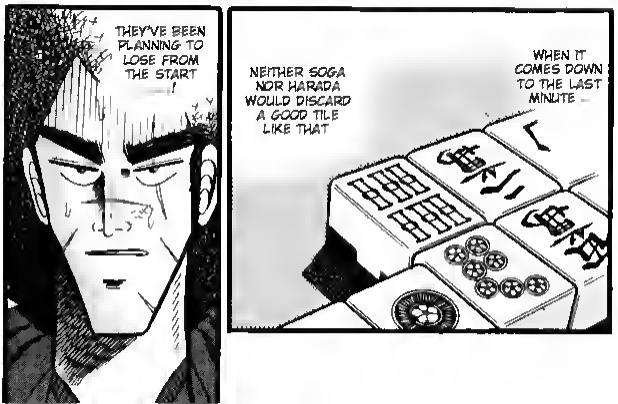


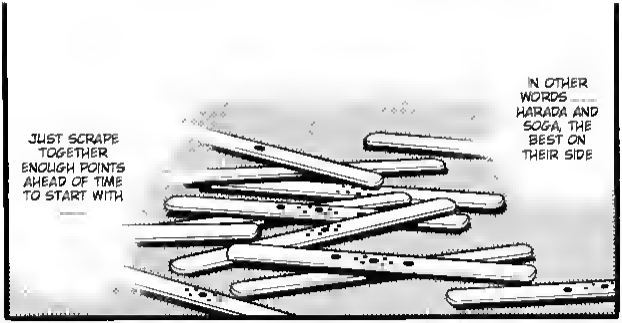
THAT'S THE ONE, SOGA...
CHIN-ITSU, 3 DORA, MAKING IT A COMEBACK WIN!!




INSTEAD OF SOGA, THE LEAD AT TABLE "A" IS——
AND MOVED INTO THE LEAD AT THE LAST MINUTE——!
H-HE'S GOT A BAIMAN HAND TOO

AKUTSU FROM WEST!
STOP FUCKING AROUND...!
AS IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF ACCIDENT...!


THEY'VE BEEN PLANNING TO LOSE FROM THE START...!
NEITHER SOGA NOR HARADA WOULD DISCARD A GOOD TILE LIKE THAT
WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO THE LAST MINUTE...


JUST SCRAPE TOGETHER ENOUGH POINTS AHEAD OF TIME TO START WITH
IN OTHER WORDS HARADA AND SOGA, THE BEST ON THEIR SIDE

AN ASSIST STRATEGY!
AND DEAL INTO THE HAND OF ANOTHER PERSON FROM WEST IN THE LAST ROUND

IF THOSE TWO STAY THERE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT WEST COULD DOMINATE THE NEXT BATTLE TOO!
AND THE STRONGEST, HARADA AND SOGA, STAY BEHIND!

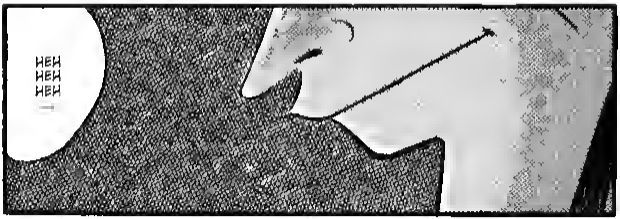
BY DOING THIS, WEST IS GUARANTEED TWO SEATS IN THE SHOWDOWN

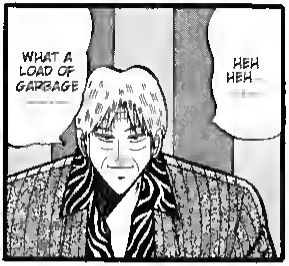
WEST'S PLAN IS TO KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE...!

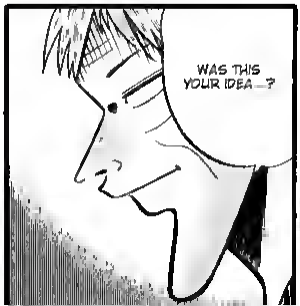
ざわざわ・・・

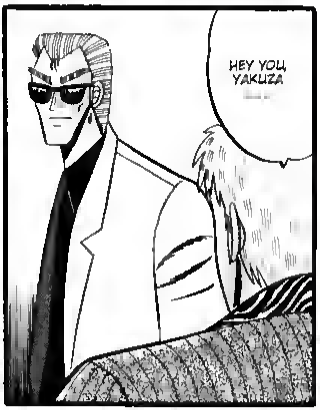
SHIT...
WE FELL FOR IT...

さわっ

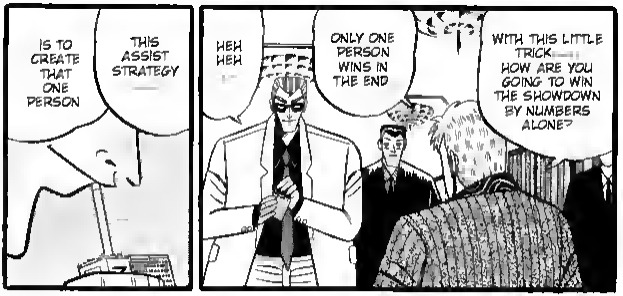

HEH
HEH
HEH


WHAT A LOAD OF GARBAGE
HEH HEH

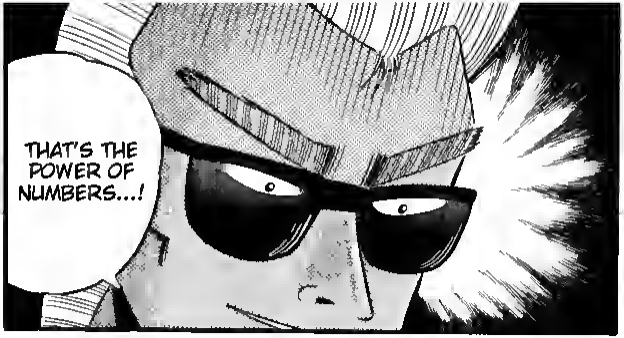

WAS THIS YOUR IDEA...?

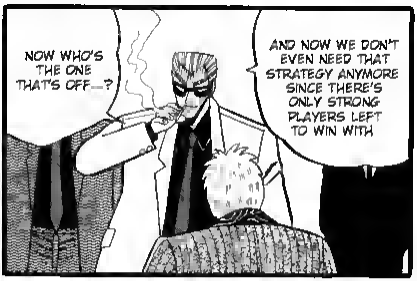

HEY YOU, YAKUZA

I THINK YOU'RE A BIT OFF

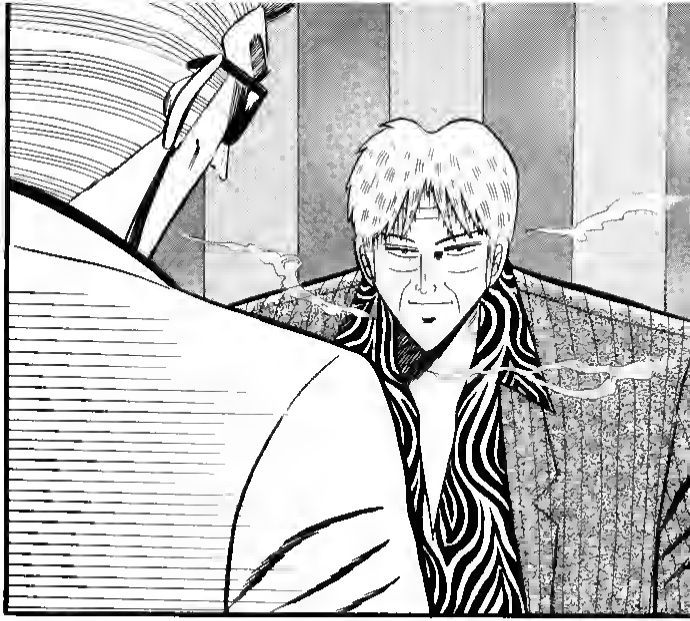

IS TO CREATE THAT ONE PERSON
THIS ASSIST STRATEGY
HEH HEH
ONLY ONE PERSON WINS IN THE END
WITH THIS LITTLE TRICK... HOW ARE YOU GOING TO WIN THE SHOWDOWN BY NUMBERS ALONE?

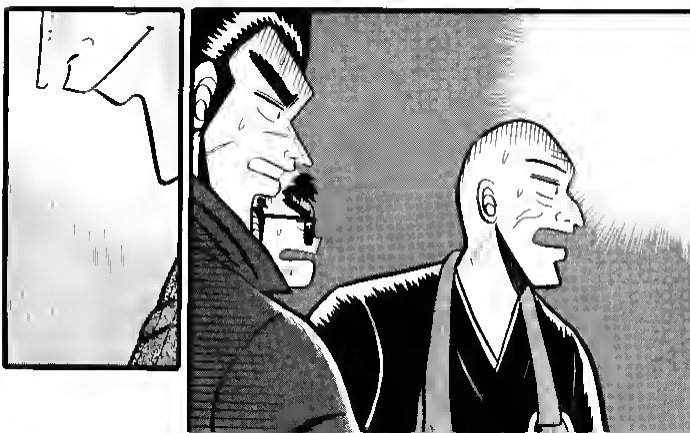
ANY MAN CAN BE CRUSHED TO DEATH
AT OUR CLASS... IF A PERSON IS SURROUNDED BY THREE OTHERS...
IT'S LIKE THE GAME'S ALREADY OVER, ISN'T IT?...
FOR INSTANCE... IF THERE'S THREE FROM WEST AND ONE FROM EAST WHEN IT COMES TIME TO CROWD AROUND THE TABLE


THAT'S THE POWER OF NUMBERS...!


NOW WHO'S THE ONE THAT'S OFF...?
AND NOW WE DON'T EVEN NEED THAT STRATEGY ANYMORE SINCE THERE'S ONLY STRONG PLAYERS LEFT TO WIN WITH

...



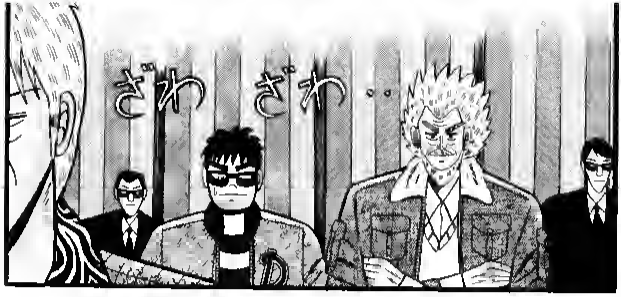


ARE YOU SOME KIND OF IDIOT ?
YOU SAY YOU'LL HAVE AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY IF YOU CAN SURROUND SOMEONE WITH THREE OTHERS
YOU'D BETTER REMEMBER THIS... YAKUZA.....
THAT KIND OF SLY TRICKERY

HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH STRENGTH!

THIS HAD BEEN THE MOST EXTREME SO FAR.
BETWEEN EAST AND WEST - MORE THAN IN THOSE BATTLES
IT COULD BE SAID THAT AKAGI AND HARADA STARING EACH OTHER DOWN WAS AN OMEN OF THINGS TO COME
THAT WAS MERELY A TOKEN.
AFTER A TEN MINUTE BREAK, THE NEW GROUPS WERE ANNOUNCED BUT
THE FIRST TIME TEN HAD ENTERED THE EAST-WEST BATTLE
TABLE "B" WAS TEN AND HARADA
TABLE "A" WAS AKAGI AND SOGA

FINALLY, THE STARS OF EAST AND WEST WOULD CLASH...!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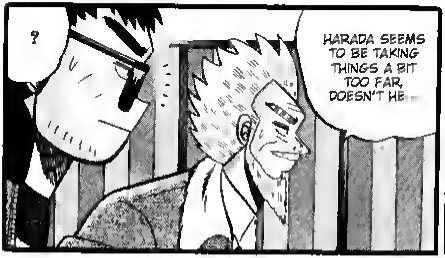
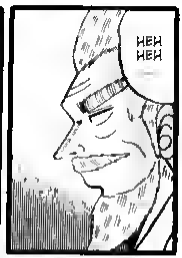
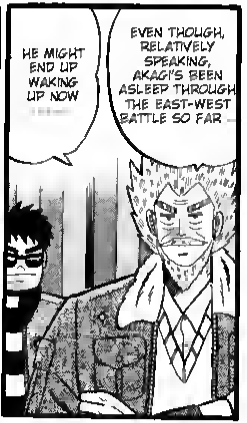
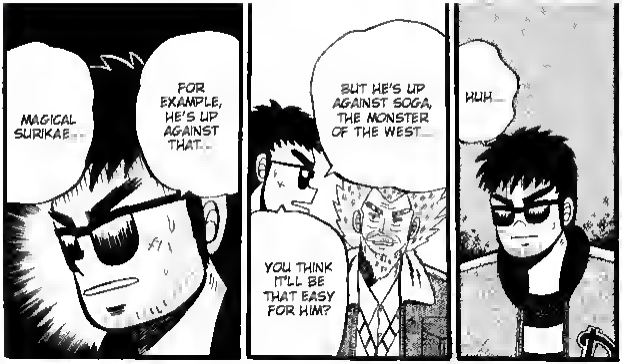

?
HARADA SEEMS TO BE TAKING THINGS A BIT TOO FAR, DOESN'T HE...


HEH HEH

IF AKAGI GETS INTO THAT MOOD


HE MIGHT END UP WAKING UP NOW
EVEN THOUGH, RELATIVELY SPEAKING, AKAGI'S BEEN ASLEEP THROUGH THE EAST-WEST BATTLE SO FAR...

NOBODY WILL BE ABLE TO MATCH HIM...!


MAGICAL SURIKAE...
FOR EXAMPLE, HE'S UP AGAINST THAT...
YOU THINK IT'LL BE THAT EASY FOR HIM?
BUT HE'S UP AGAINST SOGA, THE MONSTER OF THE WEST...
HUH...

HOW IS AKAGI GOING TO RUIN SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
WITH THAT KIND OF SKILL...
EASILY PICKING OUT THE BEST TILES... A PERFECT SURIKAE...
A GODLIKE SKILL WITHOUT A SINGLE USELESS TILE...!
IT'S LIKE HE CAN FORSEE THEM.

HUH?
WHAT DO YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE DONE IF I'D HEARD ABOUT THAT BEFORE!

I'LL DESTROY IT IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND!
HUH...
OH, YEAH...
IF I KNEW THAT, I'D HAVE DONE IT A WHILE AGO
HUH...?
HEH HEH

ONE ROUND IS ENOUGH
I DON'T NEED TIME TO CRUSH A CHILDREN'S TRICK LIKE THAT ONE...

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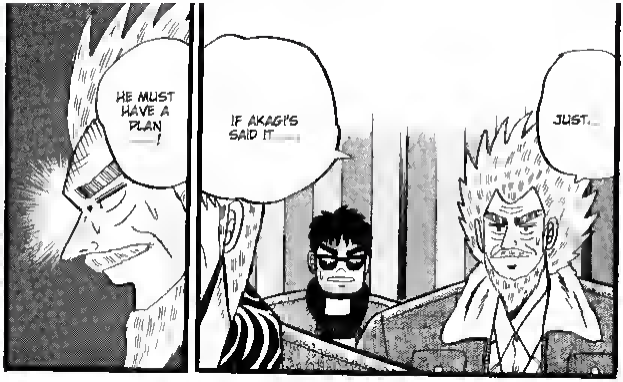
THAT— EVEN I CAN'T GUESS
WHO KNOWS
— WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT—?


HE MUST HAVE A PLAN.....!
IF AKAGI'S SAID IT.....
JUST...

A SPECIAL MOVE...!

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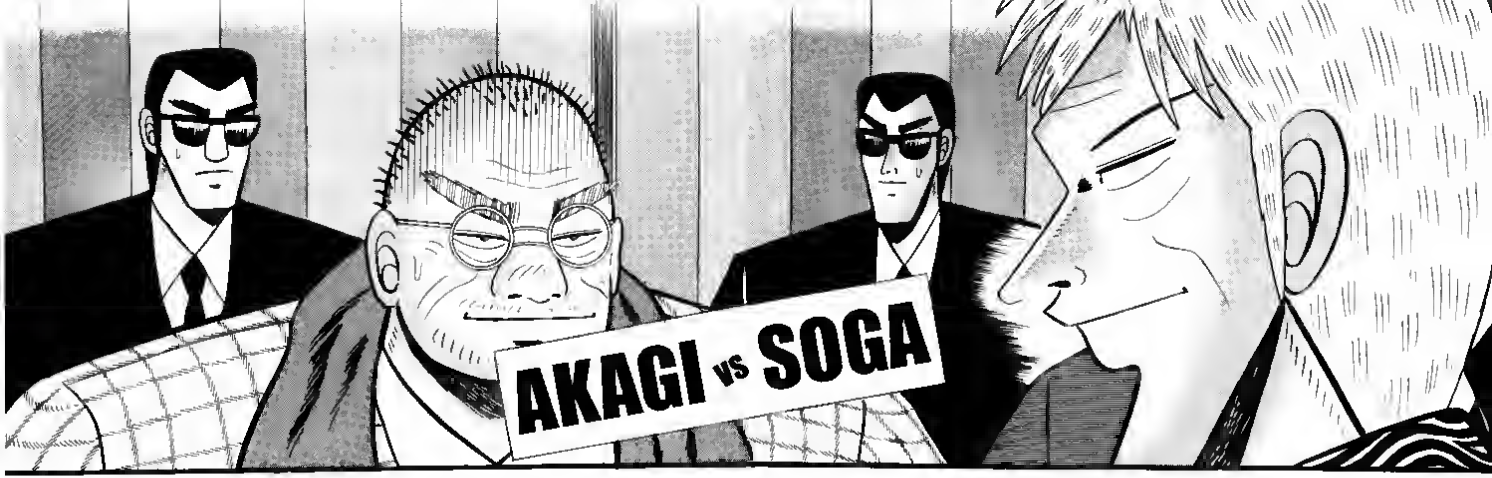
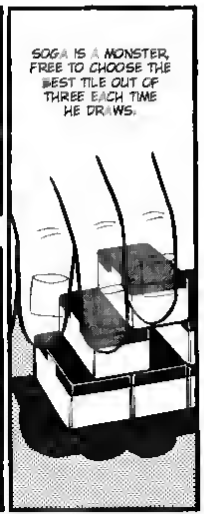
CHAPTER 44
AKAGI VS SOGA


AKAGI vs SOGA

IT'LL BE HARD TO GET CONTROL OVER HIM.
THAT SURIKAE... USES MINIMAL MOVEMENT AND IT'S HARD TO SEE INSIDE HIS HAND.


SOGA IS A MONSTER, FREE TO CHOOSE THE BEST TILE OUT OF THREE EACH TIME HE DRAWS.

THE PROBLEM IS...
PRETTY COMPLICATED AFTER THAT...

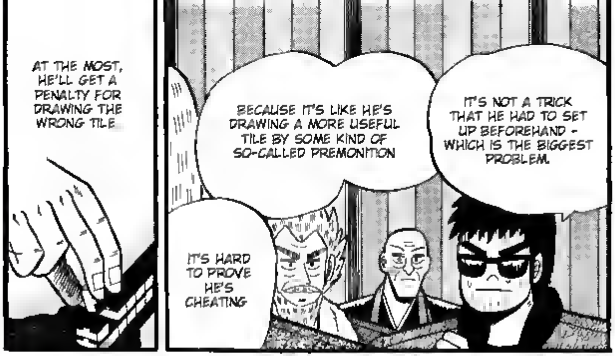
AND EVEN IF YOU COULD, JUST AS HE WAS DRAWING A DIFFERENT TILE

THAT CHILDREN'S TRICK OF SOGA'S.....

IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE...?

...BUT ...
...THAT'S WHAT AKAGI SAID.

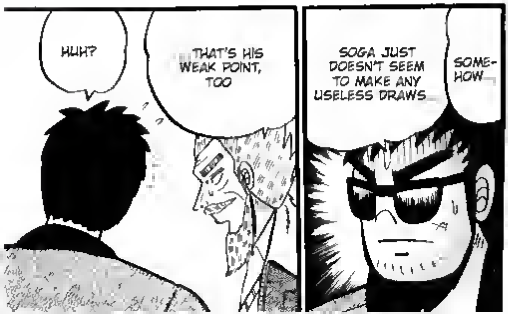
I'LL DESTROY IT IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND!

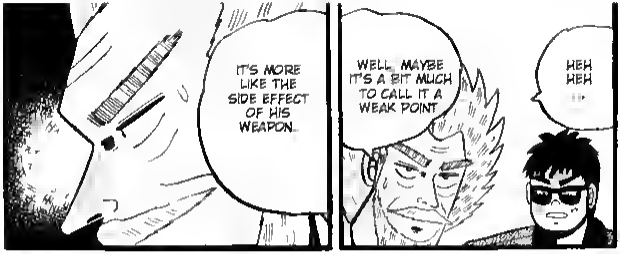

AT THE MOST, HE'LL GET A PENALTY FOR DRAWING THE WRONG TILE...
IT'S HARD TO PROVE HE'S CHEATING
BECAUSE IT'S LIKE HE'S DRAWING A MORE USEFUL TILE BY SOME KIND OF SO-CALLED PREMONITION
IT'S NOT A TRICK THAT HE HAD TO SET UP BEFOREHAND - WHICH IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM.

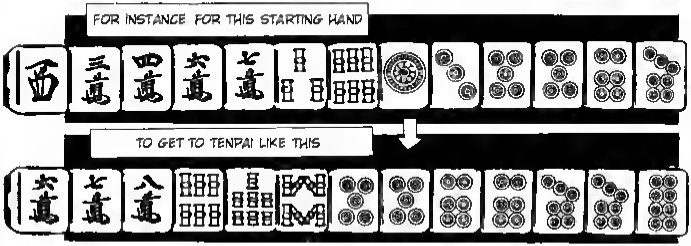
A KIND OF DOUBLE SECURITY SYSTEM.
NO MATTER WHICH WAY THINGS ROLL, HE WON'T BE OUT...!

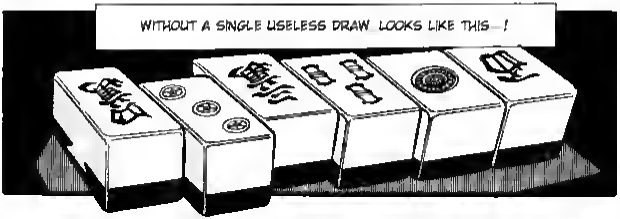
SURELY THERE'S NO WAY AKAGI CAN WIN...?
WHEN HE HAS TO PROTECT HIMSELF AGAINST THAT...

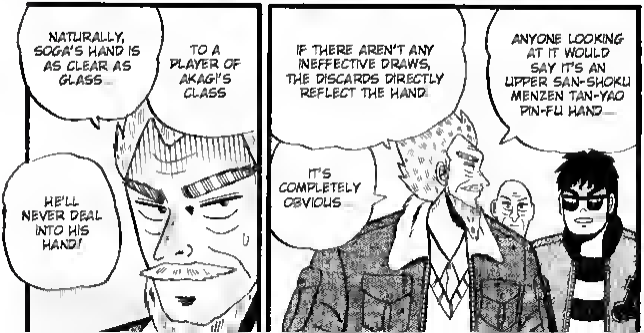
.....


HUH?
THAT'S HIS WEAK POINT, TOO
SOGA JUST DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE ANY USELESS DRAWS...
SOME-HOW...


IT'S MORE LIKE THE SIDE EFFECT OF HIS WEAPON...
WELL, MAYBE IT'S A BIT MUCH TO CALL IT A WEAK POINT
HEH HEH

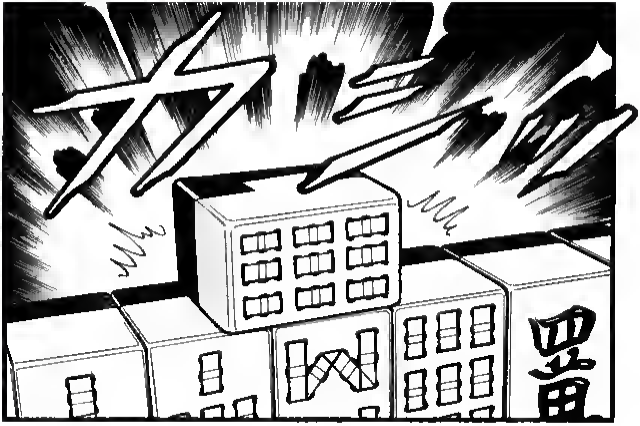

FOR INSTANCE FOR THIS STARTING HAND
TO GET TO TENPAI LIKE THIS

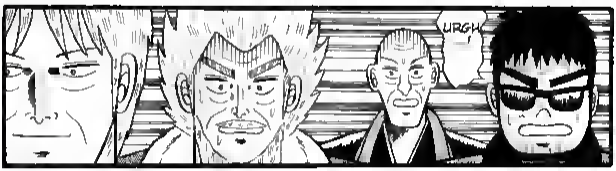

WITHOUT A SINGLE USELESS DRAW LOOKS LIKE THIS...!

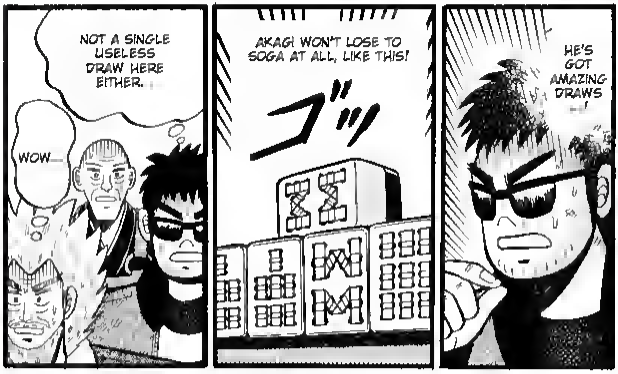

NATURALLY, SOGA'S HAND IS AS CLEAR AS GLASS...
TO A PLAYER OF AKAGI'S CLASS
HE'LL NEVER DEAL INTO HIS HAND!
IF THERE AREN'T ANY INEFFECTIVE DRAWS, THE DISCARDS DIRECTLY REFLECT THE HAND.
ANYONE LOOKING AT IT WOULD SAY IT'S AN UPPER SAN-SHOKU MENZEN TAN-YAO PIN-FU HAND...
IT'S COMPLETELY OBVIOUS...

SOGA'S GAME HAS NEVER BEEN ABOUT GETTING PEOPLE TO DEAL IN.
IT'S A GAME OF TSUMO!
SURE, THAT'S CORRECT BUT...
IT DOESN'T MATTER
WASHIO...
JUST WIN BY TSUMO...!
IN OTHER WORDS: TO WIN FASTER THAN ANY OTHER PLAYER...
SURIKAE!
IS A MAN DRAWING IN THREE TIMES AS MANY USEFUL TILES...
SOGA...
HE DOESN'T HAVE A BLIND SPOT.
HE MUST BE CLOSE TO TENPAI ALREADY...
THIS IS THE THIRD TIME...

AKAGI MIGHT NOT DEAL INTO SOGA'S HAND EVEN ONCE BUT
HE WON'T WIN EITHER...
SOGA IS ALWAYS ONE STEP FASTER...!
BUT
WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED
WAS BEYOND WHAT KANAMITSU COULD HAVE IMAGINED!
四萬
五萬

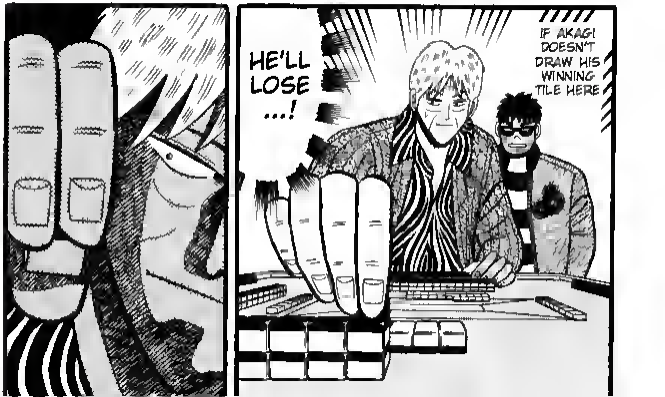


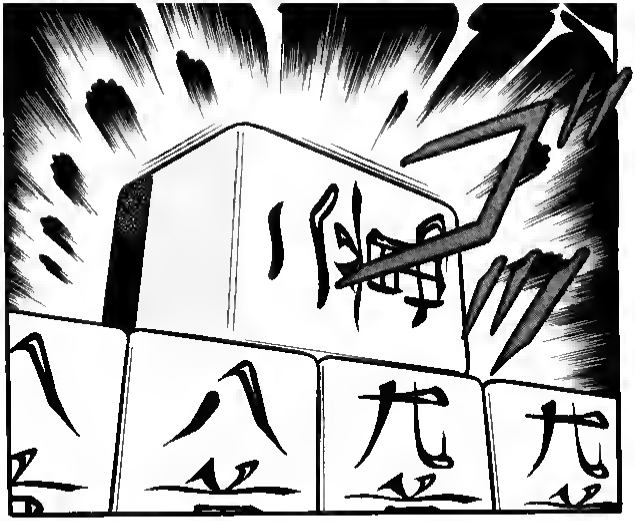

URGH


NOT A SINGLE USELESS DRAW HERE EITHER.
WOW...
AKAGI WON'T LOSE TO SOGA AT ALL, LIKE THIS!
ゴッ
HE'S GOT AMAZING DRAWS

ON THE 6TH TURN!
IN THE END, AKAGI WAS THE FIRST TO REACH TENPAI!
AKAGI'S WAIT: 6, 7, 8, OR 9-MAN
THIS LAST WAIT OF HIS ISN'T SO GREAT...
IT'S BEEN GOING WELL FOR AKAGI SO FAR BUT...
ONLY ONE LEFT...
THERE'S ONLY A SLIM CHANCE FOR IT TO BE JUN-CHAN RYAN-PEI-KOU WITH THE 9-MAN...!

RIICHI!
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE'LL GET IPPATSU TSUMO...!
SINCE SOGA WENT FOR RIICHI
HERE IT COMES!

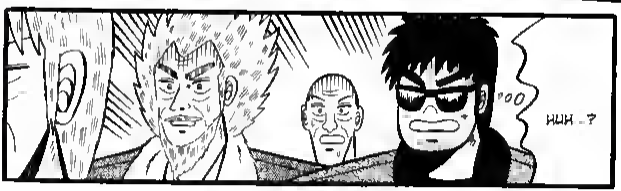

HE'LL LOSE ...!
IF AKAGI DOESN'T DRAW HIS WINNING TILE HERE

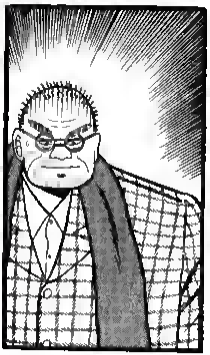


IT'S NO GOOD

HE COULDN'T GET THAT LAST STEP...!

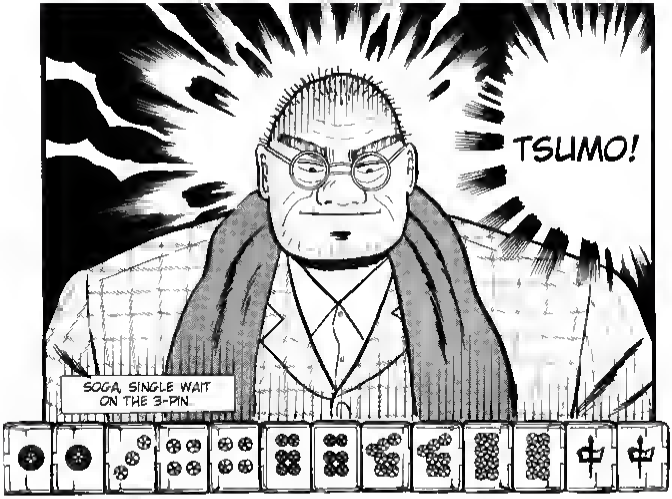
RIICHI!

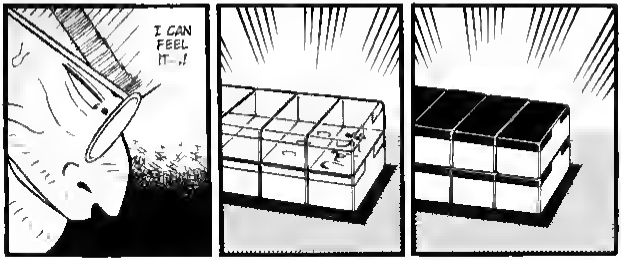

HUH-?

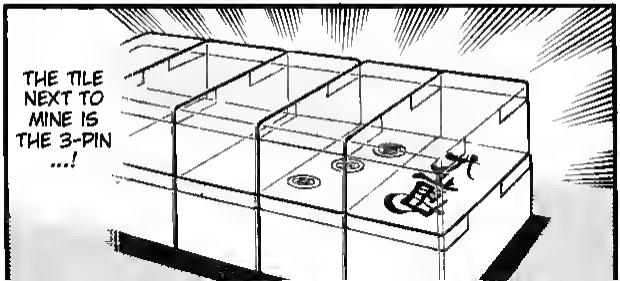


WITH THAT SURIKAE SOGA WILL NEVER GRAB THE TILE THAT WOULD DEAL INTO AKAGI'S HAND...!
AND WITH THE NEXT DRAW SOGA WILL PROBABLY...

WHY-?


TSUMO!
SOGA, SINGLE WAIT ON THE 3-PIN.


I CAN FEEL IT...!


THE TILE NEXT TO MINE IS THE 3-PIN ...!

JUST DO SURIKAE HERE AND I'LL WIN!
URGH
I'VE WON!

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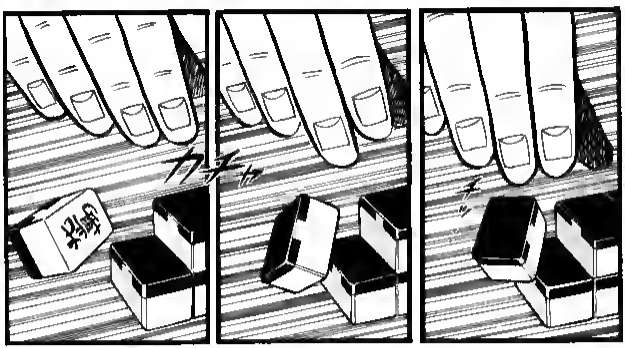
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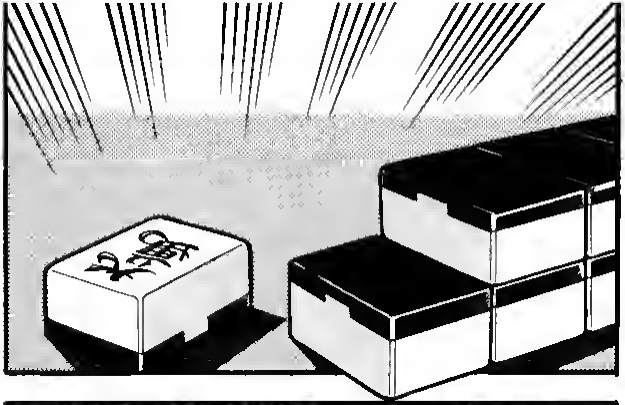
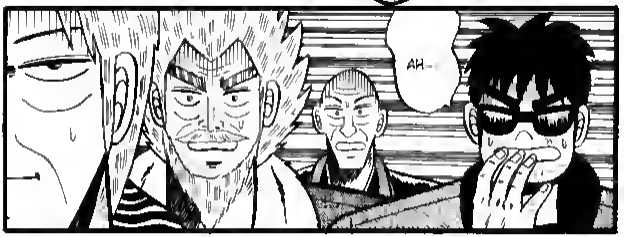
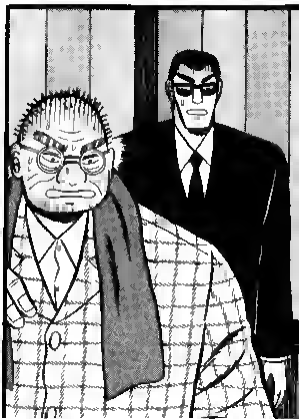
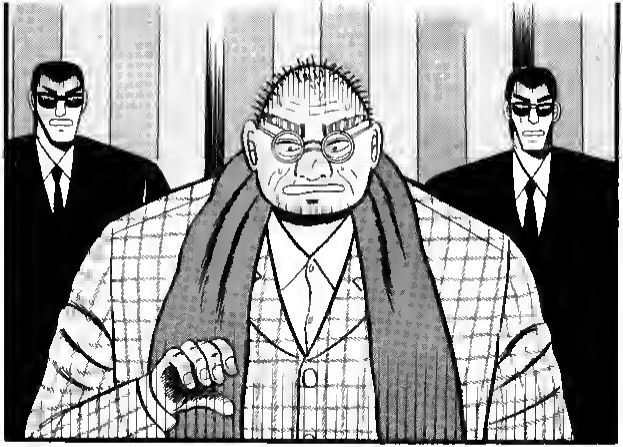



AH—





HEH HEH HEH

OH, SORRY ABOUT THAT...

EVEN THOUGH EVERYONE'S SEEN THE TILE YOU'D DRAW

THERE SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM

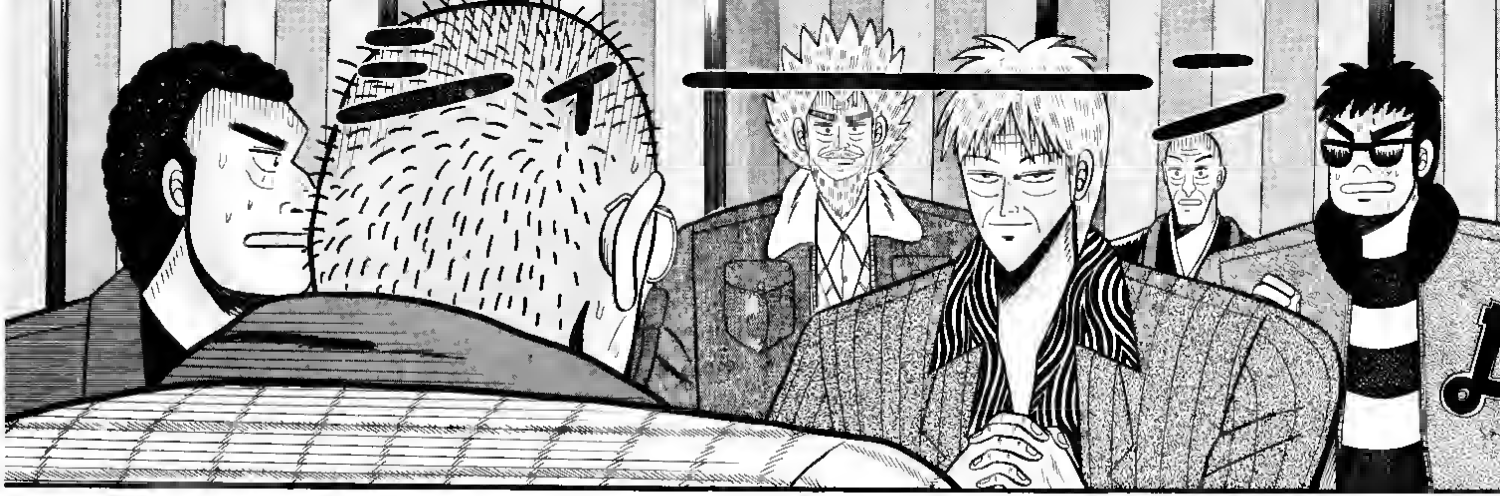
A PERSON IN RICHI CAN EITHER WIN WITH THAT TILE OR... IF THEY CAN'T, THEY HAVE TO DISCARD IT.

RIGHT...?

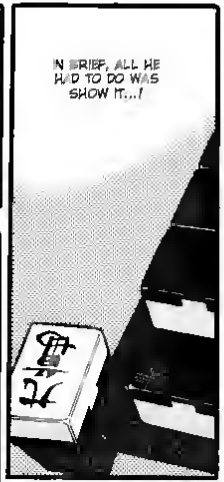
REALLY, THE GREAT AND ALL-POWERFUL SOGA IS COMMONLY KNOWN AS A MAN WHO GETS IPPATSU TSUMO

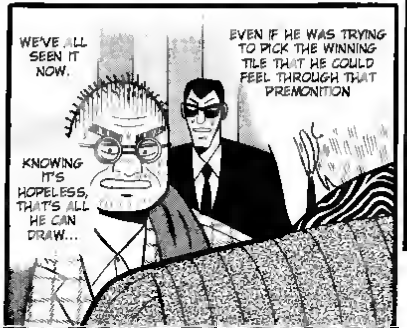
SO THERE'S NO PROBLEM...!

OR AM I WRONG?



PREMONITIONS OR WHATEVER DON'T MATTER...!
AFTER EVERYONE'S SEEN THAT TILE


IN BRIEF, ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS SHOW IT...!


WE'VE ALL SEEN IT NOW.
EVEN IF HE WAS TRYING TO PICK THE WINNING TILE THAT HE COULD FEEL THROUGH THAT PREMONITION
KNOWING IT'S HOPELESS, THAT'S ALL HE CAN DRAW...

THAT HE CAN FORSEE THE TILE HE'LL GET.
THE WORST POINT OF SOGA'S GODLIKE SKILL IS...

SEALED IT AWAY...
AND THEN THIS MAN, IN A SIMPLE WAY LIKE THIS

IT FELT LIKE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFEND AGAINST SOGA'S BLACK MAGIC...
IT WAS HORRIBLE...

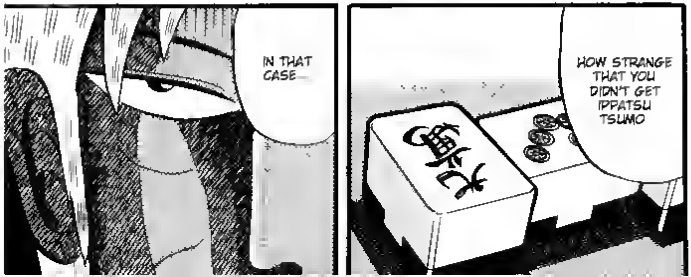
THE IDEA FOR A COME-BACK WIN ...!

THIS MAN IS
A MONSTER!
IT'S SIMPLE, BUT THERE'S NO MORE EFFECTIVE WAY TO DEAL WITH SOGA...!
IS DIFFERENT FROM THE AVERAGE PERSON!
THE WHOLE NATURE OF HIS IDEAS

.....

DO YOU WANT TO JUST SIT AROUND AND WASTE TIME...?
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU STOPPED, OLD FELLA...
HEH HEH...

HEH HEH...


IN THAT CASE...
HOW STRANGE THAT YOU DIDN'T GET IPPATSU TSUMO

ミ〃ナラ〃..
I'LL TAKE THE WIN...!
RIICHI, PIN-FU, IPPATSU
JUN-CHAN RYAN-PEI-KOU!
BAIMAN...!
WOOHOO...!
YOU DID IT!
STARTING A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE FOR EAST!
THAT'S OUR AKAGI!

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.....
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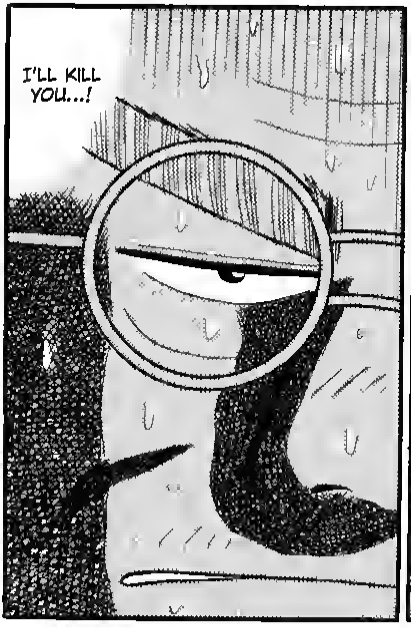
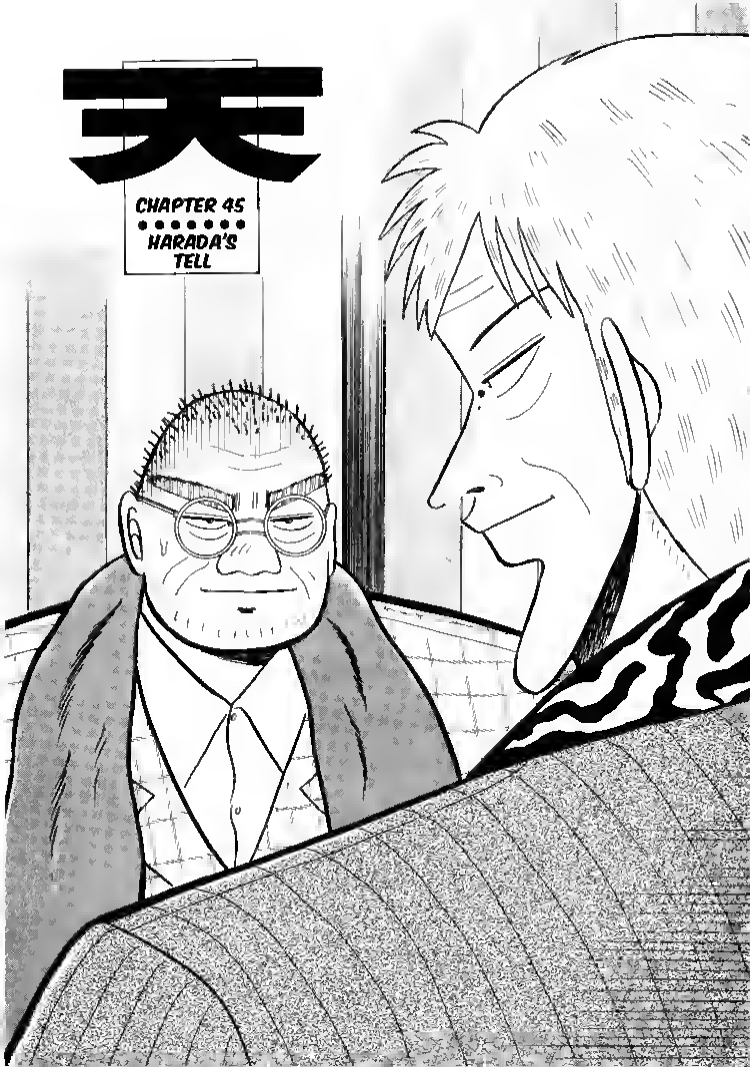
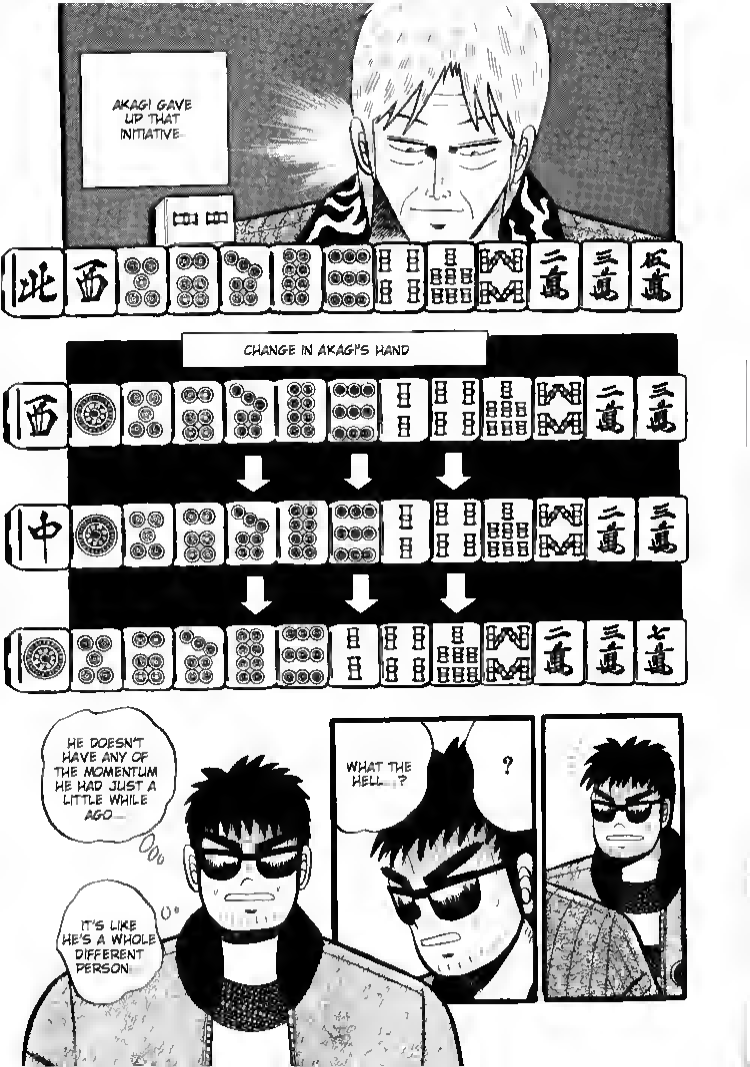
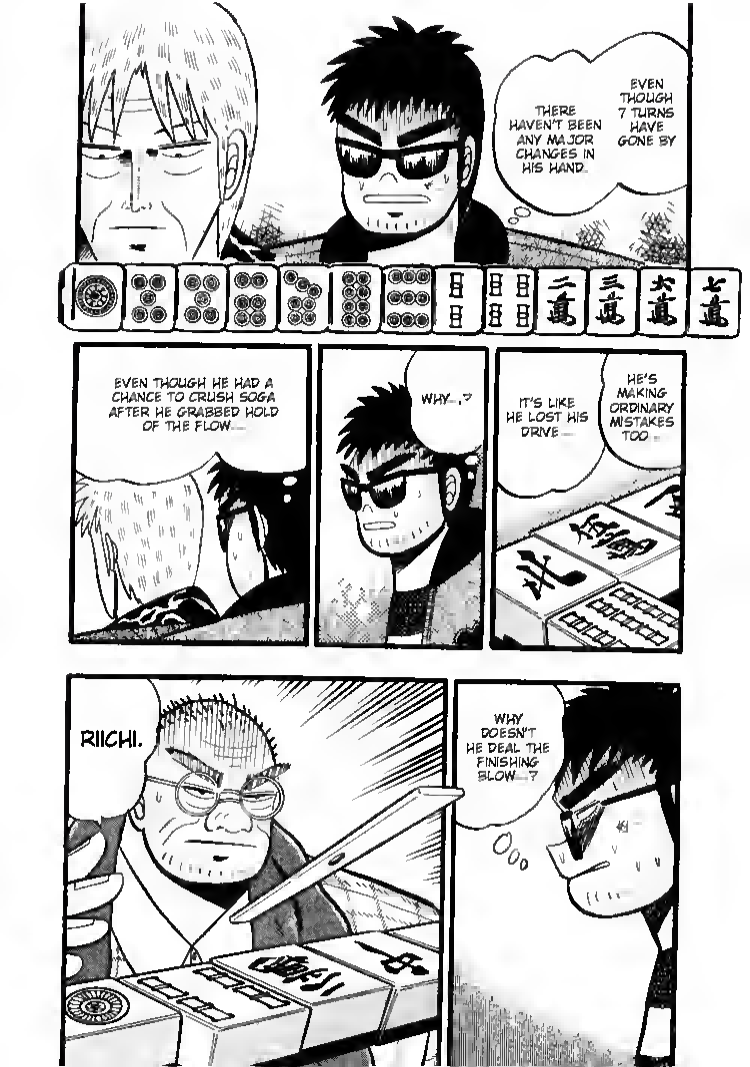
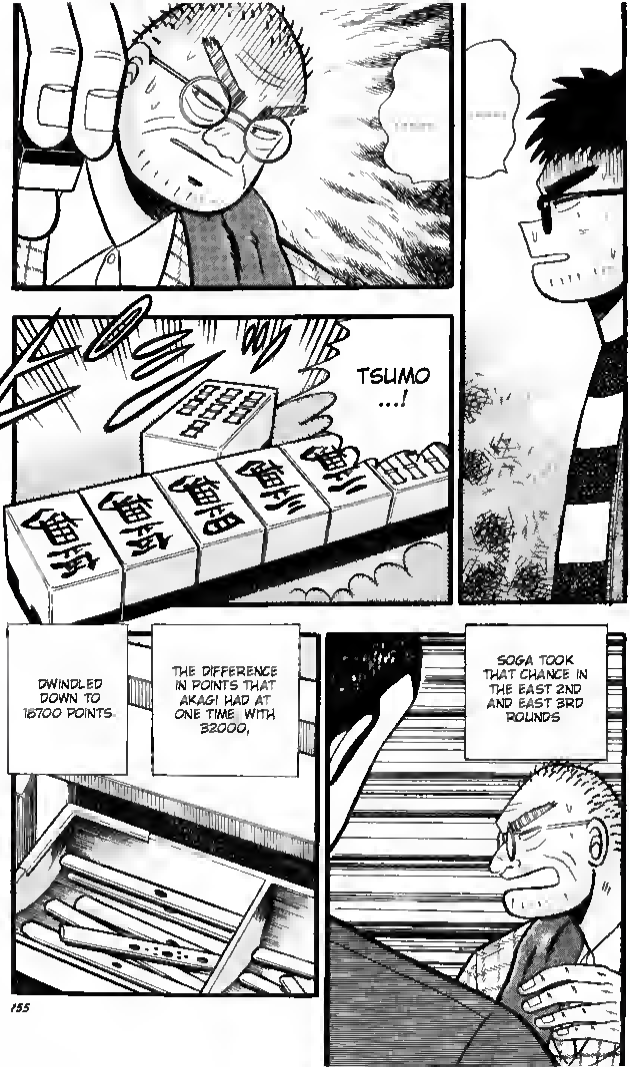

I'LL KILL YOU...!

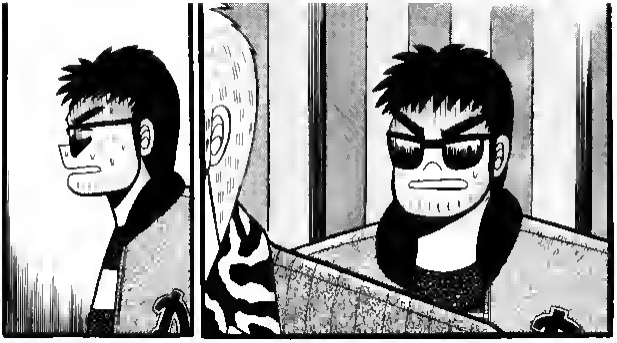

CHAPTER 45
HARADA'S TELL

IN THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN AKAGI AND SOGA
AKAGI WAS ONE STEP IN THE LEAD AGAINST SOGA
THROUGH A SURPRISE MOVE IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND.
HE HAD THE INITIATIVE
BUT


AKAGI GAVE UP THAT INITIATIVE...
CHANGE IN AKAGI'S HAND
HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY OF THE MOMENTUM HE HAD JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO...
IT'S LIKE HE'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSON
WHAT THE HELL...?
?


EVEN THOUGH 7 TURNS HAVE GONE BY
THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN HIS HAND.
EVEN THOUGH HE HAD A CHANCE TO CRUSH SOGA AFTER HE GRABBED HOLD OF THE FLOW—
WHY...?
IT'S LIKE HE LOST HIS DRIVE—
HE'S MAKING ORDINARY MISTAKES TOO—
RIICHI.
WHY DOESN'T HE DEAL THE FINISHING BLOW—?


TSUMO ...!
SOGA TOOK THAT CHANCE IN THE EAST 2ND AND EAST 3RD ROUNDS
THE DIFFERENCE IN POINTS THAT AKAGI HAD AT ONE TIME WITH 32000,
DWINDLED DOWN TO 18700 POINTS.



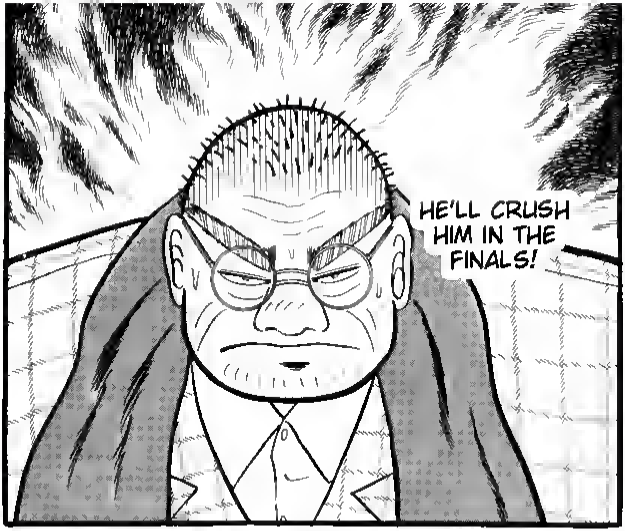
WHY...?

AKAGI ISN'T PLANNING TO FINISH IT OFF YET.
BUT... THE FIGHT BETWEEN AKAGI AND SOGA IS STILL—!
WE'RE DONE WITH THIS TABLE ...LET'S GO OVER TO TEN'S TABLE.
HUH...?
HE'S JUST THROWING TILES AROUND NOW.
HUH...?

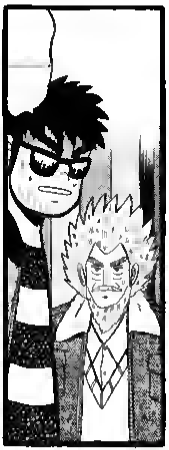
WE'LL TALK MORE OVER ON THE SIDE
THROWING TILES AROUND ...?
COME ON!
IT'S SIMPLE, FROM AKAGI'S POINT OF VIEW
SOGA IS GOING TO WIN THE QUALIFYING ROUND AFTER THIS AND ADVANCE TO THE SHOWDOWN.
EVEN IF HE CRUSHES SOGA HERE
EVEN IF HE CRUSHED SOGA WITH HIS FULL STRENGTH HERE, THERE'S NOTHING HE CAN DO ABOUT THAT
TAKING THE LEAD HERE IS A SO-CALLED QUALIFYING ROUND
JUST THINK ABOUT IT
PEOPLE WHO LOSE ARE STILL LEFT WITH A CHANCE ...

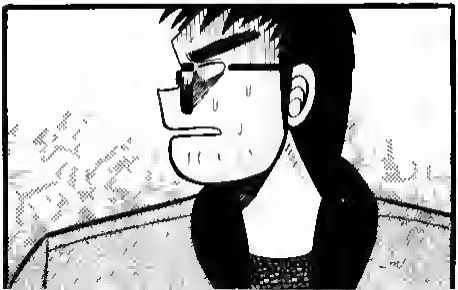
AKAGI KNOWS THIS TOO
SO WHILE IT'S TOO BAD
HE CAN'T BE TOTALLY ELIMINATED IN THIS BATTLE...
IT'D BE A WASTE OF EFFORT
AND WITH THAT, HE'S DONE FOR THIS HAN-CHAN
THAT WAS THE BAIMAN HAND IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND
THAT'S WHY HE THINKS IT'S ENOUGH TO SCORE A RETURN BLOW IN THIS HAN-CHAN
SINCE HE DOESN'T WANT TO REVEAL WHAT'S IN HIS OWN HAND ANY MORE THAN HE HAS TO
HE'S GETTING RID OF THE TRACE OF IT NOW

IT'S... UNNERVING TO HIM AND HE MIGHT HONESTLY WANT TO CHALLENGE AKAGI AT FULL STRENGTH BUT
NOW... HE'S PLAYING AT 70% STRENGTH
SOGA'S DOING THE SAME RIGHT NOW TOO
BECAUSE THIS BATTLE ISN'T ABOUT TOTAL ELIMINATION
SO FOR NOW 70% STRENGTH IS ENOUGH
HE CAN'T...
AND WHEN HE CAN TOTALLY ELIMINATE AKAGI...
THE REAL MATCH IS STILL COMING UP...
HE'S ADVISED TO SOOTHE THE USELESS INCLINATION TO PLAY RECKLESSLY

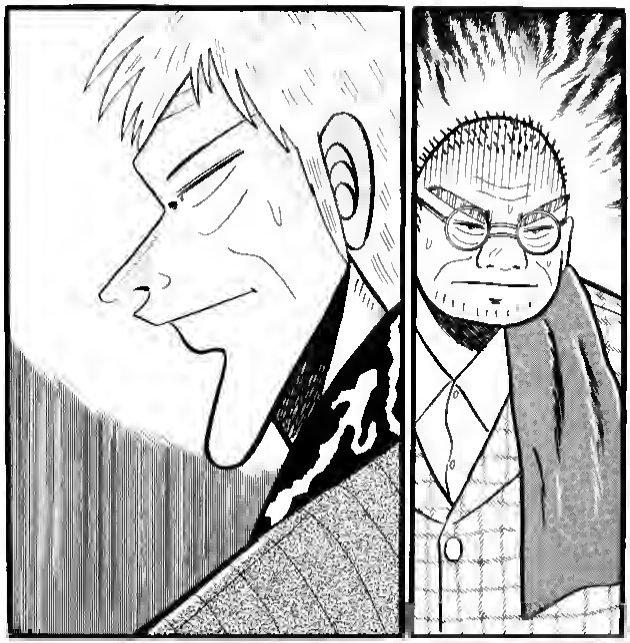

HE'LL CRUSH HIM IN THE FINALS!

SO... RIGHT NOW THEY'RE WAITING AND WATCHING, WHILE SHARPENING THEIR FANGS...
THAT'S WHAT AKAGI'S THINKING TOO...





HE'LL CRUSH HIM IN THE FINALS.....!

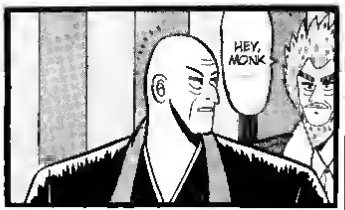


THE OTHER CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TIGER AND DRAGON -

I WONDER ABOUT THE FLOW.
BUT...

TEN'S ONE STEP AHEAD OF HARADA IN TERMS OF POINTS.

PON!
THE FLOW SEEMS TO BE WITH HARADA...


HEY, MONK.

HOW'S IT LOOKING...?

TEN VS. HARADA!

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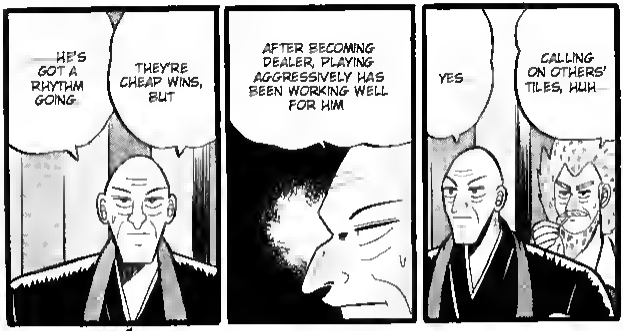
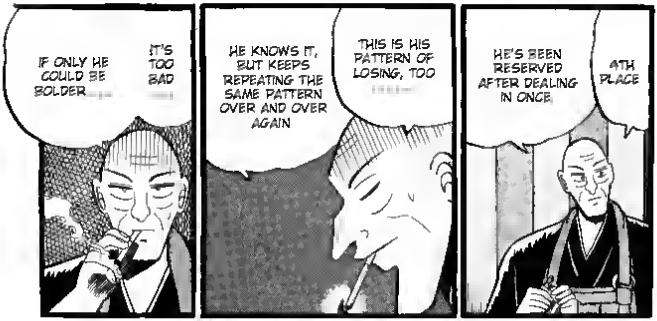
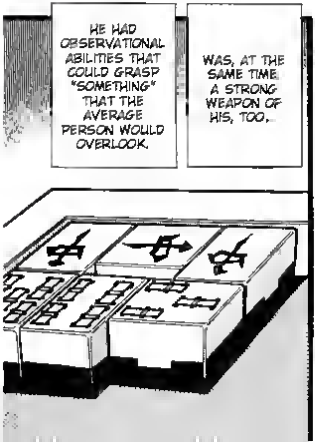

CALLING ON OTHERS' TILES, HUH
YES
AFTER BECOMING DEALER, PLAYING AGGRESSIVELY HAS BEEN WORKING WELL FOR HIM
THEY'RE CHEAP WINS, BUT
HE'S GOT A RHYTHM GOING

CHII!
カラ

HOW'S HIROYUKI...?


IF ONLY HE COULD BE BOLDER...
IT'S TOO BAD...
HE KNOWS IT, BUT KEEPS REPEATING THE SAME PATTERN OVER AND OVER AGAIN
THIS IS HIS PATTERN OF LOSING, TOO...
HE'S BEEN RESERVED AFTER DEALING IN ONCE.
4TH PLACE


HE HAD OBSERVATIONAL ABILITIES THAT COULD GRASP "SOMETHING" THAT THE AVERAGE PERSON WOULD OVERLOOK.
WAS, AT THE SAME TIME, A STRONG WEAPON OF HIS, TOO.

HIROYUKI'S DELICACY

HAD ALREADY SEEN "SOME-THING".
IN FACT..... AT THIS POINT, HIROYUKI
THAT "THING" HIROYUKI SAW WAS
THAT ...
PON ...!

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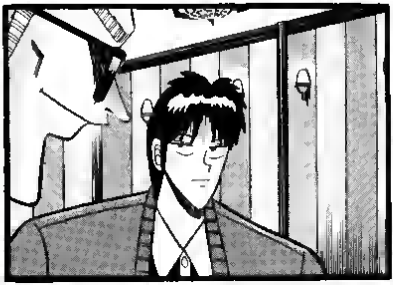

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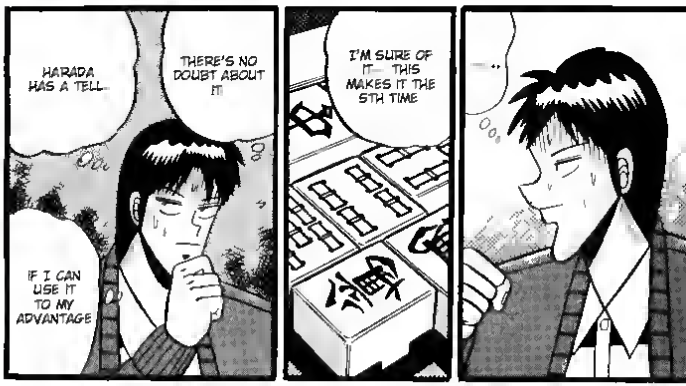
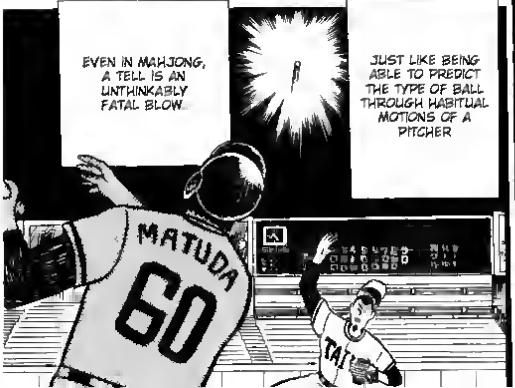
HARADA'S TELL
A MOVEMENT THAT HAPPENS NATURALLY DURING PLAY.

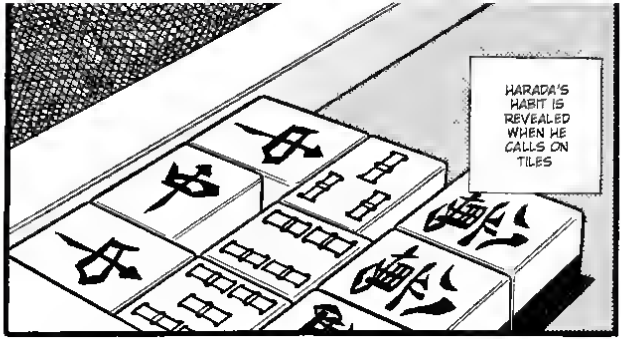

HARADA HAS A TELL.
THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
IF I CAN USE IT TO MY ADVANTAGE
I'M SURE OF IT... THIS MAKES IT THE 5TH TIME
...

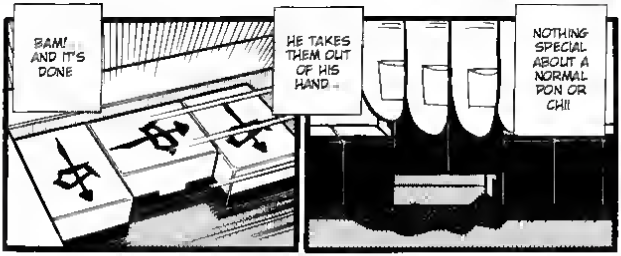
I CAN TAKE OUT HARADA ...!

THAT NOBODY'S GUESSED AT...
IT COULD HAPPEN THAT THE MAN CALLED THE CURRENT BEST HAS A TELL

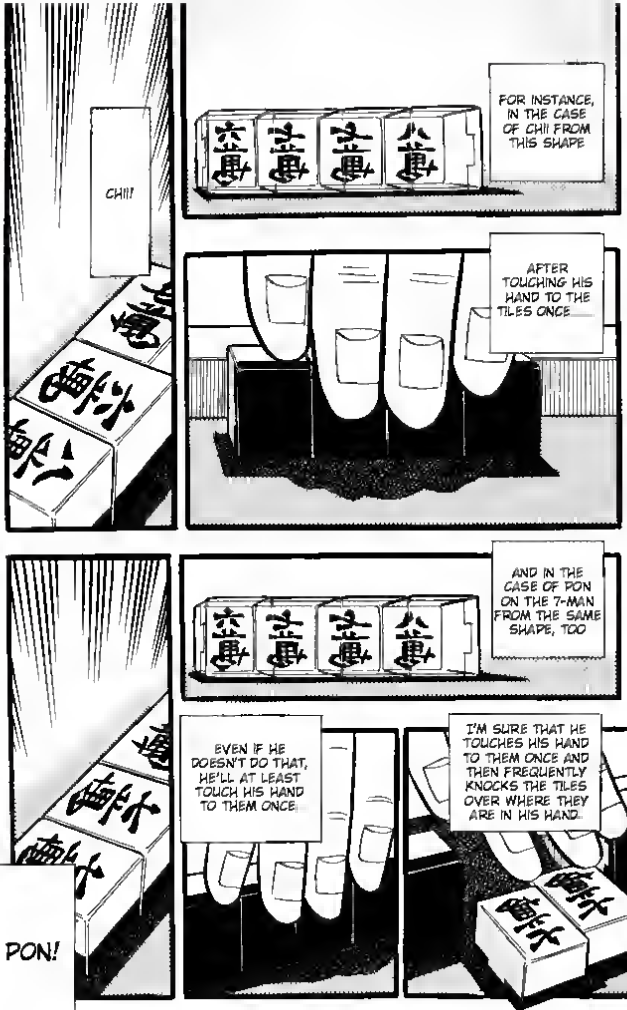
I'M PROBABLY THE ONLY PERSON HERE THAT NOTICED IT...

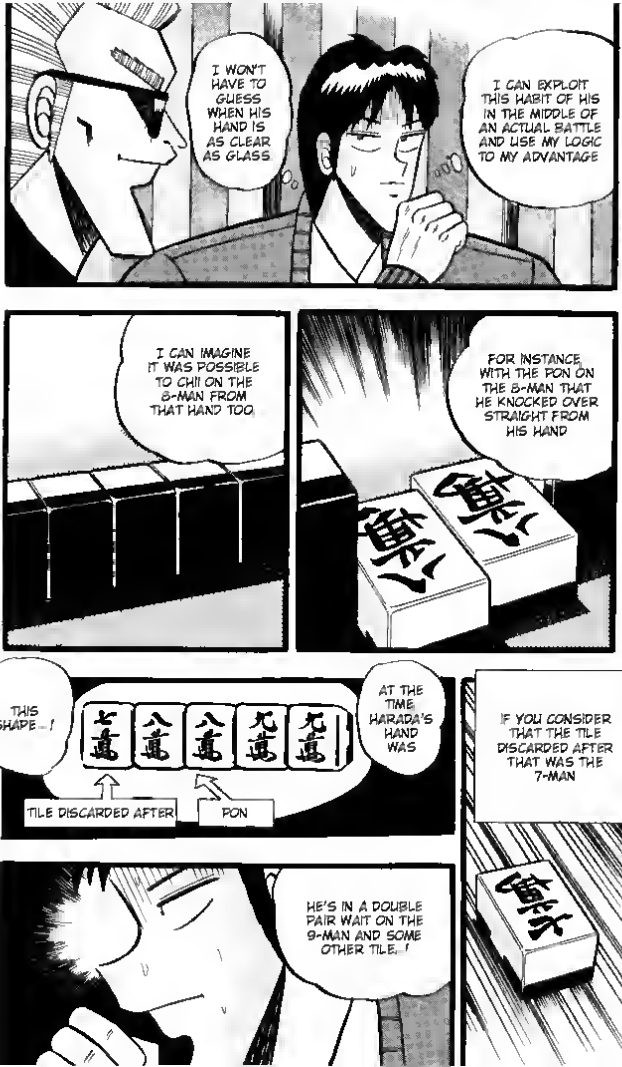

EVEN IN MAHJONG, A TELL IS AN UNTHINKABLY FATAL BLOW...
JUST LIKE BEING ABLE TO PREDICT THE TYPE OF BALL THROUGH HABITUAL MOTIONS OF A PITCHER
MATUDA
60


HARADA'S HABIT IS REVEALED WHEN HE CALLS ON TILES


BAM! AND IT'S DONE
HE TAKES THEM OUT OF HIS HAND...
NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT A NORMAL PON OR CHI!

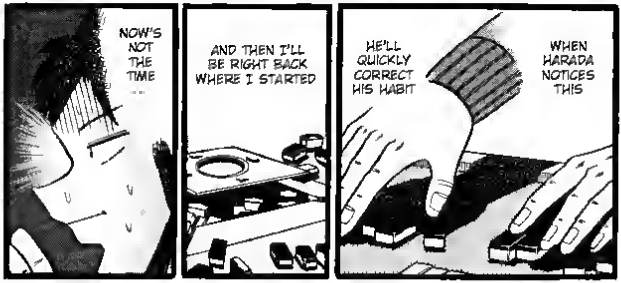
IN THOSE KINDS OF SITUATIONS, HARADA'S HABIT SHOWS UP
IF THE 7-MAN COMES OUT FROM THE PLAYER TO HIS LEFT
BUT FOR INSTANCE, WITH THIS SHAPE OF HAND
IN CASES WHERE HE COULD PON OR CHI!
IN OTHER WORDS


CHII!
FOR INSTANCE, IN THE CASE OF CHII FROM THIS SHAPE
AFTER TOUCHING HIS HAND TO THE TILES ONCE...
AND IN THE CASE OF PON ON THE 7-MAN FROM THE SAME SHAPE, TOO
PON!
EVEN IF HE DOESN'T DO THAT, HE'LL AT LEAST TOUCH HIS HAND TO THEM ONCE.
I'M SURE THAT HE TOUCHES HIS HAND TO THEM ONCE AND THEN FREQUENTLY KNOCKS THE TILES OVER WHERE THEY ARE IN HIS HAND.


I WON'T HAVE TO GUESS WHEN HIS HAND IS AS CLEAR AS GLASS
I CAN EXPLOIT THIS HABIT OF HIS IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ACTUAL BATTLE AND USE MY LOGIC TO MY ADVANTAGE
I CAN IMAGINE IT WAS POSSIBLE TO CHI! ON THE 8-MAN FROM THAT HAND TOO.
FOR INSTANCE, WITH THE PON ON THE 8-MAN THAT HE KNOCKED OVER STRAIGHT FROM HIS HAND
THIS SHAPE...!
七萬 八萬 八萬 九萬 九萬
TILE DISCARDED AFTER
PON
AT THE TIME HARADA'S HAND WAS
IF YOU CONSIDER THAT THE TILE DISCARDED AFTER THAT WAS THE 7-MAN
HE'S IN A DOUBLE PAIR WAIT ON THE 9-MAN AND SOME OTHER TILE...!

TSUMO!
ONLY CHUN!
CALM DOWN
ドキ
ドキ
THERE IS NO DOUBT
I'M SURE OF IT

IN A MORE EFFECTIVE SCENARIO...!
I CAN USE HARADA'S TELL ONLY ONCE
ONLY ONCE


NOW'S NOT THE TIME...
AND THEN I'LL BE RIGHT BACK WHERE I STARTED
HE'LL QUICKLY CORRECT HIS HABIT
WHEN HARADA NOTICES THIS

FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW UP ...!
JUST WAIT...!

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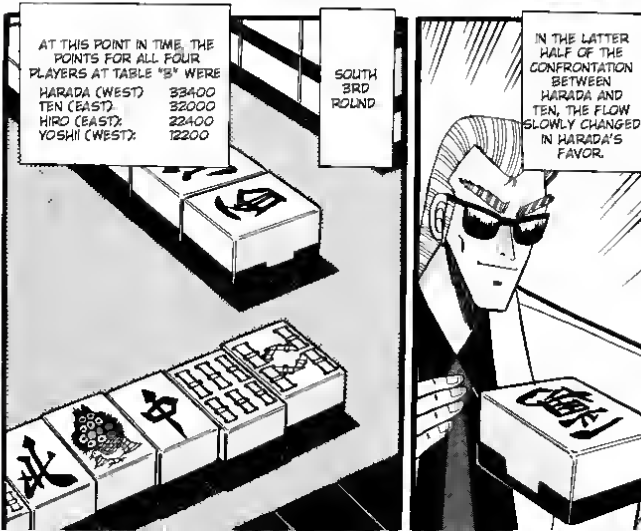
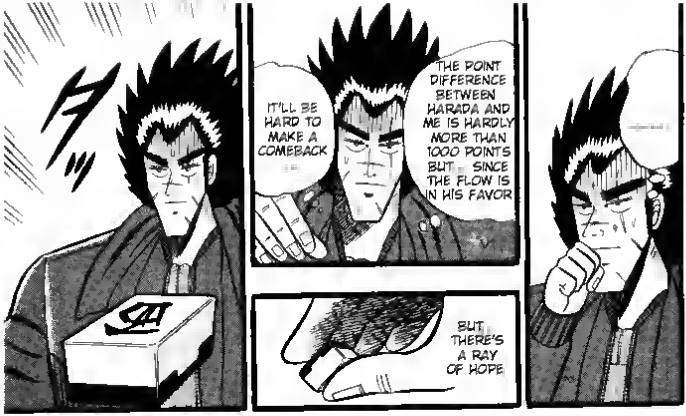
CHAPTER 46
DIRECT AND
REFLECTION

SECOND QUALIFYING ROUND OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE.


AT THIS POINT IN TIME, THE POINTS FOR ALL FOUR PLAYERS AT TABLE "B" WERE
HARADA (WEST) 33400
TEN (EAST): 32000
HIRO (EAST): 22400
YOSHII (WEST): 12200
SOUTH 3RD ROUND
IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HARADA AND TEN, THE FLOW SLOWLY CHANGED IN HARADA'S FAVOR.


IT'LL BE HARD TO MAKE A COMEBACK
THE POINT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HARADA AND ME IS HARDLY MORE THAN 1000 POINTS BUT... SINCE THE FLOW IS IN HIS FAVOR
BUT THERE'S A RAY OF HOPE

HIROYUKI...!

IT'LL BE POSSIBLE TO PUSH HIROYUKI UP INTO THE SHOWDOWN ROUND...!
IF I CAN GIVE HIM AN ASSIST (INTENTIONALLY DEALING INTO HIROYUKI'S HAND)
IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S GOT AN EVEN BETTER FLOW THAN ME
HIROYUKI'S DOING HIS BEST

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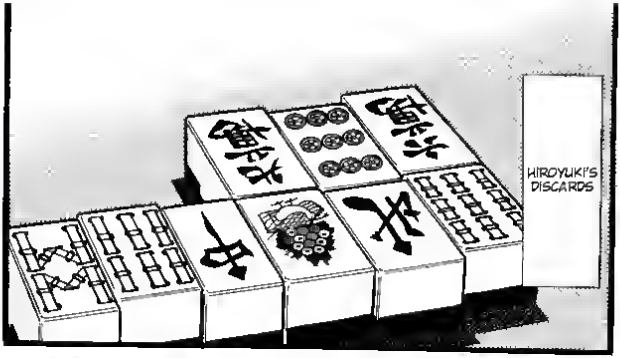
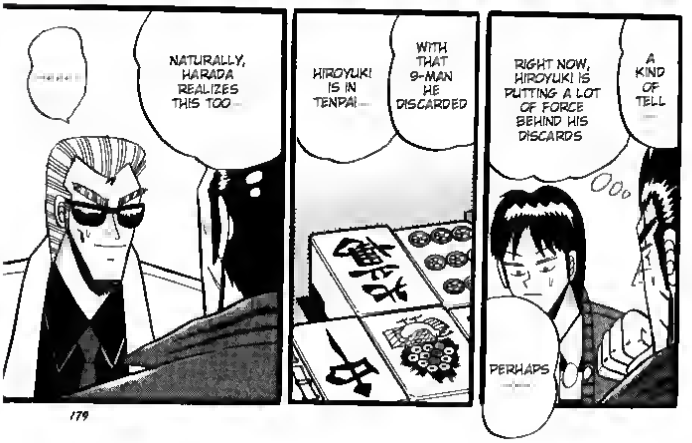
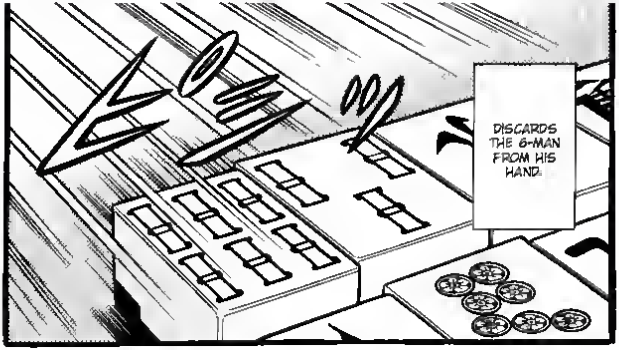
九萬
七萬
九萬
……


HIROYUKI'S DISCARDS

HE HAD SOME KIND OF INSIGHT... JUST NOW...
.....


.....
NATURALLY, HARADA REALIZES THIS TOO...
HIROYUKI IS IN TENPAI...
WITH THAT 9-MAN HE DISCARDED
RIGHT NOW, HIROYUKI IS PUTTING A LOT OF FORCE BEHIND HIS DISCARDS
A KIND OF TELL...
Ooo
PERHAPS.....

.....
HE KEEPS THE TILE HE DREW
AND TAKES A DIFFERENT TILE OUT
AND THE NEXT TURN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DISCARDS THE 6-MAN FROM HIS HAND.

IT'S CLEAR.

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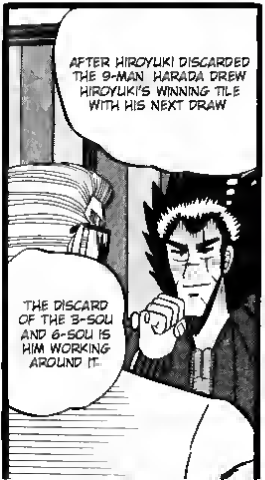
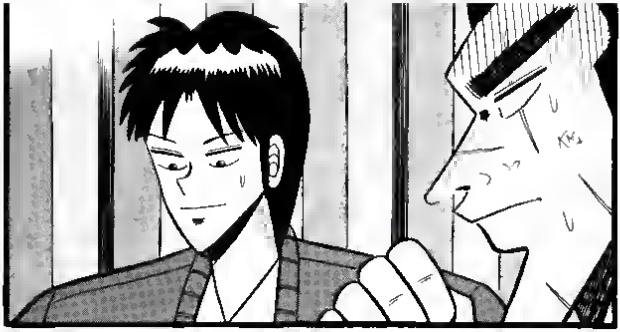
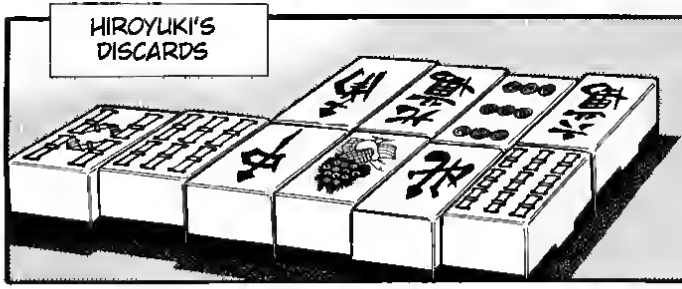
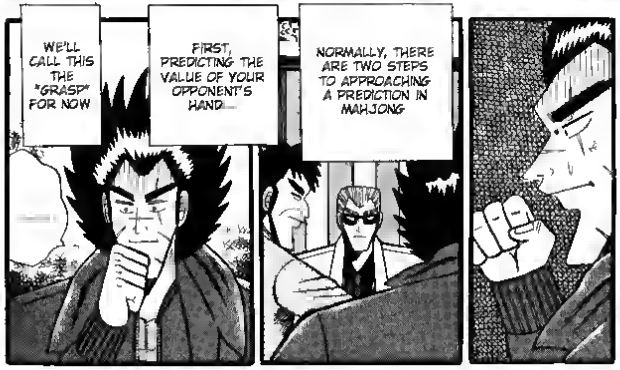
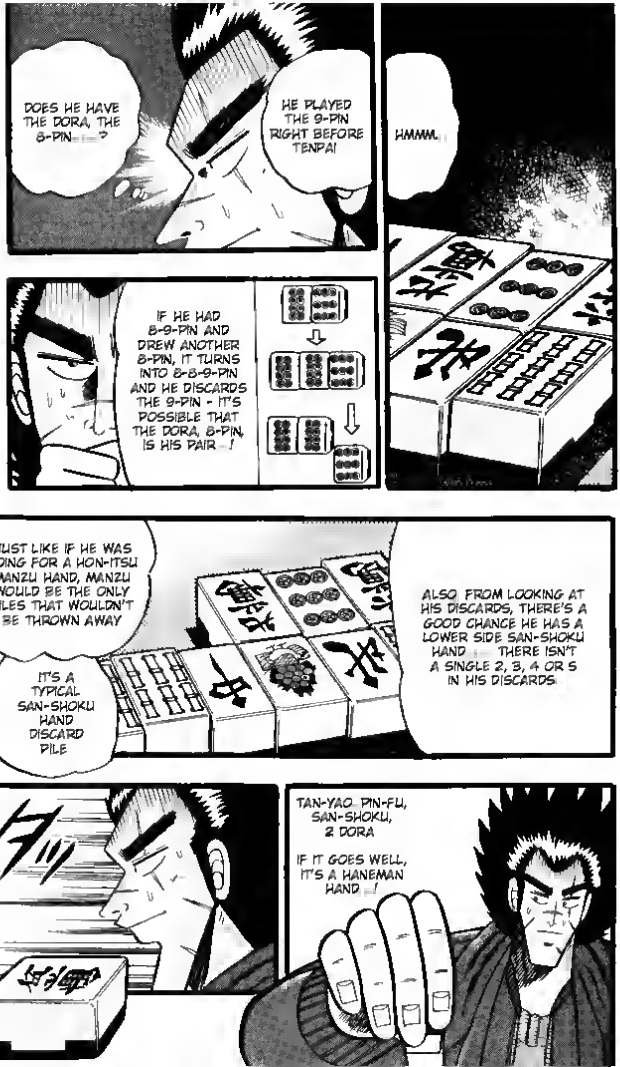
SO WHAT'S HIRO'S HAND....?


AFTER HIROYUKI DISCARDED THE 9-MAN HARADA DREW HIROYUKI'S WINNING TILE WITH HIS NEXT DRAW
THE DISCARD OF THE 3-SOU AND 6-SOU IS HIM WORKING AROUND IT.




HIROYUKI'S DISCARDS

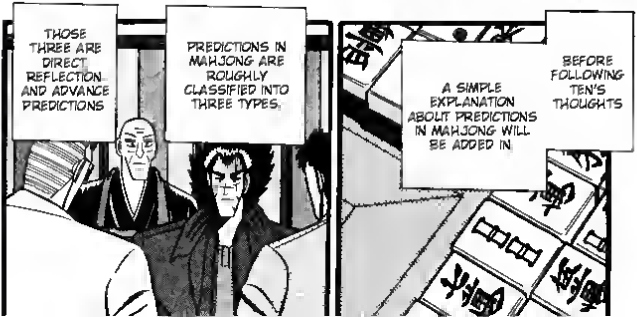

WE'LL CALL THIS THE "GRASP" FOR NOW
FIRST, PREDICTING THE VALUE OF YOUR OPPONENT'S HAND...
NORMALLY, THERE ARE TWO STEPS TO APPROACHING A PREDICTION IN MAHJONG


DOES HE HAVE THE DORA, THE 8-PIN...?
HE PLAYED THE 9-PIN RIGHT BEFORE TENPAI
HMMM...
IF HE HAD 8-9-PIN AND DREW ANOTHER 8-PIN, IT TURNS INTO 8-8-9-PIN AND HE DISCARDS THE 9-PIN - IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE DORA, 8-PIN, IS HIS PAIR...!
JUST LIKE IF HE WAS GOING FOR A HON-ITSU MANZU HAND, MANZU WOULD BE THE ONLY TILES THAT WOULDN'T BE THROWN AWAY
IT'S A TYPICAL SAN-SHOKU HAND DISCARD PILE
ALSO FROM LOOKING AT HIS DISCARDS, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE HAS A LOWER SIDE SAN-SHOKU HAND... THERE ISN'T A SINGLE 2, 3, 4 OR 5 IN HIS DISCARDS
TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, SAN-SHOKU, 2 DORA
IF IT GOES WELL, IT'S A HANEMAN HAND...!

A PLAYER OF TEN'S CLASS CAN DO THAT IN AN INSTANT.
HE HAD A GRASP OF IT AT A QUICK GLANCE!
HIS RESTRICTIONS!
THE SECOND STEP IN THE PREDICTION
BUT THE PROBLEM AFTER THAT IS
THIS IS THE DIFFICULT TASK
IN SHORT THE TILES THAT HE IS CURRENTLY HOLDING

I HAVEN'T CAUGHT THE SUBTLE NUANCES OF HIS PLAY...
...HIRO'S ON MY SIDE SO I HAVEN'T BEEN KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR HIS DISCARDS
CRAP...
PREDICTING ANY FURTHER THAN THIS IS PROBABLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME RIGHT NOW...!
I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HIS RESTRICTIONS
I'M SURE HE'S GOT IT NARROWED DOWN...!
UNLIKE ME HE'S OPPOSING HIROYUKI'S HAND...
HARADA SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE IT...!
IN HARADA'S CASE...
BUT...

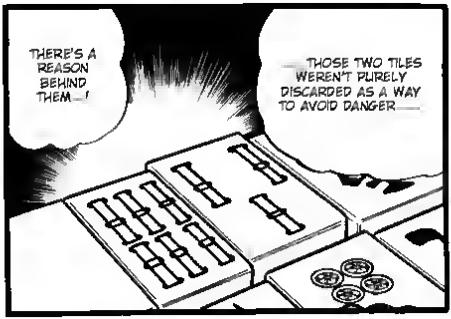
HARADA'S DISCARDS
NOW TEN'S THOUGHTS TURNED TO HARADA'S DISCARDS...


THOSE THREE ARE DIRECT REFLECTION AND ADVANCE PREDICTIONS
PREDICTIONS IN MAHJONG ARE ROUGHLY CLASSIFIED INTO THREE TYPES.
A SIMPLE EXPLANATION ABOUT PREDICTIONS IN MAHJONG WILL BE ADDED IN
BEFORE FOLLOWING TEN'S THOUGHTS

THIS IS THE MOST GENERAL TYPE
A WAY THAT DIRECTLY REVEALS THE HAND FROM THE DISCARDS OF THE PERSON IN QUESTION
IS LIKE THE WAY TEN WAS GOING BY HIROYUKI'S DISCARDS A MOMENT AGO.
DIRECT PREDICTION
IS THE SO-CALLED REFLECTION
WHAT TEN IS THINKING OF NOW
AN IRRE-GULAR PRE-DICTION METHOD
USING ANOTHER PLAYER'S DISCARDS LIKE A REFLECTION OF THE LIGHT
TO FIGURING OUT THE TILE HIROYUKI IS AIMING FOR...
TO WHAT IS IN HARADA'S HAND
FROM HARADA'S DISCARDS

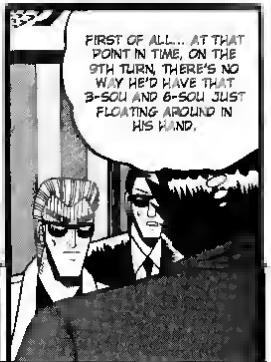
ADVANCED PLAYERS ADD REFLECTION TO THAT PREDICTION.
BEGINNING AND INTERMEDIATE LEVEL PLAYERS
AGAINST A PLAYER IN RICHI, THOSE THAT MAKE DO WITH ONLY DIRECT PREDICTION ARE
AND ABOVE THAT STATE IS ADVANCE PREDICTIONS, WHICH WILL BE EXPANDED UPON LATER.
REFLECTION, A DEFINITE STATE ONE RANK ABOVE.
HERE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE GAME SOLIDIFIES BEFORE THEIR EYES
RIGHT NOW, THERE IS REFLECTION.

AND BEGAN TO TURN AT HIGH SPEED.
TEN'S THOUGHTS CRACKED THROUGH HARADA'S DISCARD OF THE 3-SOU AND 6-SOU


THERE'S A REASON BEHIND THEM...!
...THOSE TWO TILES WEREN'T PURELY DISCARDED AS A WAY TO AVOID DANGER...

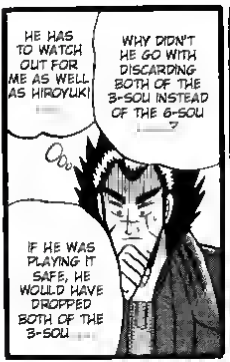
AFTER HIROYUKI GOT INTO TENPAI, HE DISCARDED THAT 3-SOU AND 6-SOU...

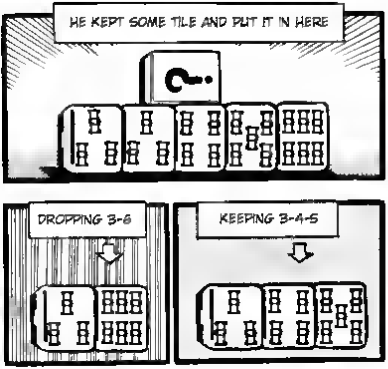
IN OTHER WORDS, BEFORE HE TOOK THEM OUT OF HIS HAND, HE HAD 3-4-5-6!
THOSE TILES WERE ORGANIZED INTO A GROUP.....


FIRST OF ALL... AT THAT POINT IN TIME, ON THE 9TH TURN, THERE'S NO WAY HE'D HAVE THAT 3-SOU AND 6-SOU JUST FLOATING AROUND IN HIS HAND.

FIRST OFF, THIS SHAPE IS FUNDAMENTAL
AND THIS IS WHERE A DISCREPANCY WITH THE 3-4-5-6-SOU COMES UP, TOO.
IF THERE WAS ONE 3-SOU HE WOULDN'T DISCARD THE 6-SOU FROM THAT SHAPE AFTERWARDS.
SO, IN HIS HAND...
WELL...
I'M HOLDING TWO OF THE 6-SOU
WHICH OF THESE SHAPES IS IT...?
SO HARADA CAN'T BE USING TWO OF THE 6-SOU...
THERE'S ONE IN HIRO'S DISCARDS... SO THREE OF THEM ARE ALREADY IN USE

IN THE END, THIS IS THE ONLY SHAPE HARADA CAN HAVE.....!


HE HAS TO WATCH OUT FOR ME AS WELL AS HIROYUKI
WHY DIDN'T HE GO WITH DISCARDING BOTH OF THE 3-SOU INSTEAD OF THE 6-SOU
IF HE WAS PLAYING IT SAFE, HE WOULD HAVE DROPPED BOTH OF THE 3-SOU

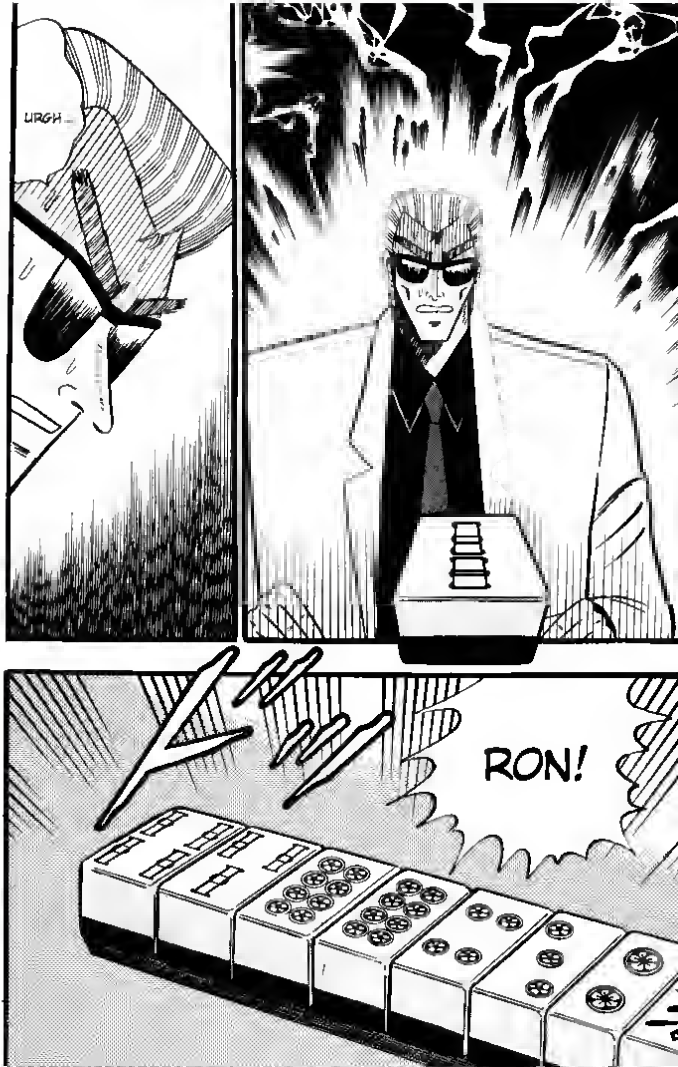

HE KEPT SOME TILE AND PUT IT IN HERE
DROPPING 3-6
KEEPING 3-4-5

TO RE-ORGANIZE HIS HAND!

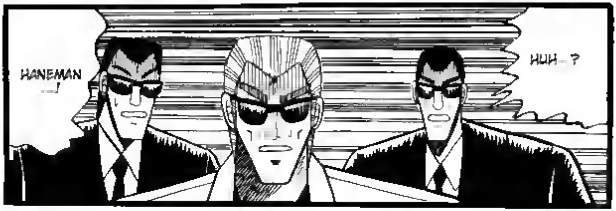
A REFINED KIND OF DANGER, A REASON TO CLOSE HIS EYES AND DISCARD THE 3-6-SOU.
BUT... FOR HARADA, IT'S NECESSARY TO BE A LITTLE BIT RECKLESS HERE

IT WASN'T 4-5-6-SOU HE WANTED, IT WAS 3-4-5
WHAT HE DREW AND PUT IN HIS HAND IS OBVIOUS
AFTER GETTING THIS FAR
HE DREW THE 2-SOU .....!
YES...!

HE'S IN AN EXTENDED WAIT FOR 2-SOU OR 5-SOU...!
NOW
AND DISCARDED THE 3-SOU AND 6-SOU...!
THE TILE THAT HARADA STOPPED FOR...!
SO THIS 2-SOU SHOULD BE HIROYUKI'S WINNING TILE
BY HIRO ...!
HIRO AND HARADA ARE BOTH WAITING ON 2-SOU OR 5-SOU
THEY'RE IN TENPAI ON THE SAME WAIT
ATAMA-HANE...!
IN THE CASE, BEFORE HARADA CAN RIDE THE FLOW AND DRAW IT


URGH...
RON!

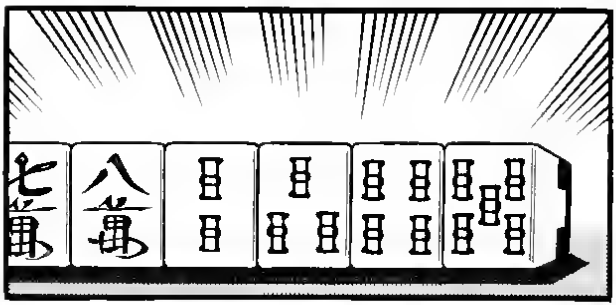
TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, SAN-SHOKU, 2 DORA.
HANEMAN ...!
Yung Ma

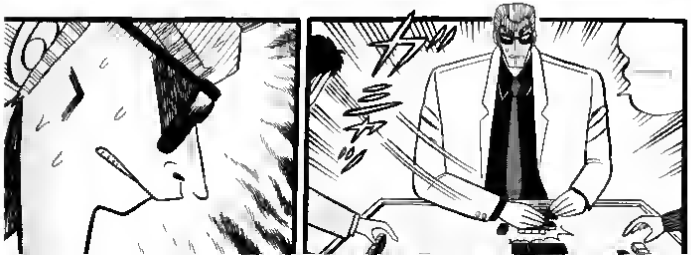

HANEMAN ...!
HUH...?

HE'S IN THE LEAD ...!
BECAUSE HARADA WAS ONLY ABOVE THE FLOAT BY 3400...
ざわ
WHAT'S GOING ON...?

THA KID FROM EAST TOOK THE LEAD AT THE LAST MINUTE
ざわ
HARADA'S BEHIND BY 1000 POINTS
ざわ
THAT'S CRAZY
ざわ
I KNOW WHAT YOU DID
THIS IS YOUR ASSIST
IT'S LIKELY
THAT HARADA WAS IN TENPAI WAITING ON THAT SAME 2-5-SOU...!

PLUCKED HARADA OUT OF THE LEAD...!
TEN...





YEAH.....
HEH HEH

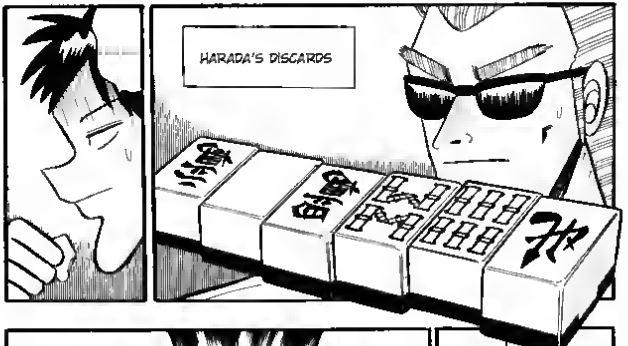
SEE... HARADA...
THE WORLD DOESN'T REVOLVE AROUND YOUR SCHEMES AS EASILY AS YOU THOUGHT...

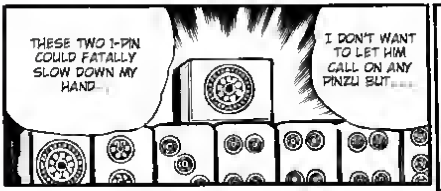
天
CHAPTER 47
HARADA'S TRAP

ざわ
ざわ
EAST-WEST BATTLE
SECOND MATCH
HARADA'S IN THE SAME POSITION TO TAKE THE LEAD TOO
THE POINT DIFFERENCE IS ONLY 1000
MHMM
MAYBE, MAYBE
ざわ
THE FIRST ONE TO WIN TAKES TABLE "B"
IT'S A SORT OF RACE BETWEEN THOSE TWO
AND STOLE THE LEAD FROM HARADA AT THE LAST MINUTE
HIROYUKI WAS SAVED BY TEN'S ASSIST
WITH AN UN-EXPECTED DEVELOP-MENT
AT TABLE "B", WHERE TEN AND HARADA WERE SEATED, THEY MET THE SOUTH 4TH ROUND
A SITUATION WHERE ANY KIND OF CHEAP HAND WOULD PUT HIROYUKI IN 1ST PLACE
LAST ROUND

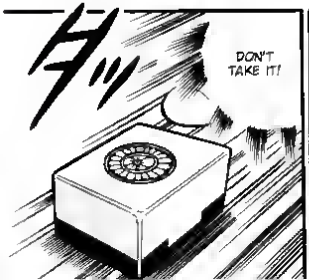
PON!
5TH TURN
HARADA HAS THE FIRST STEP AHEAD
THAT CHUN IS HARADA'S EXPRESS TICKET TO VICTORY
6TH TURN

HIROYUKI'S HAND

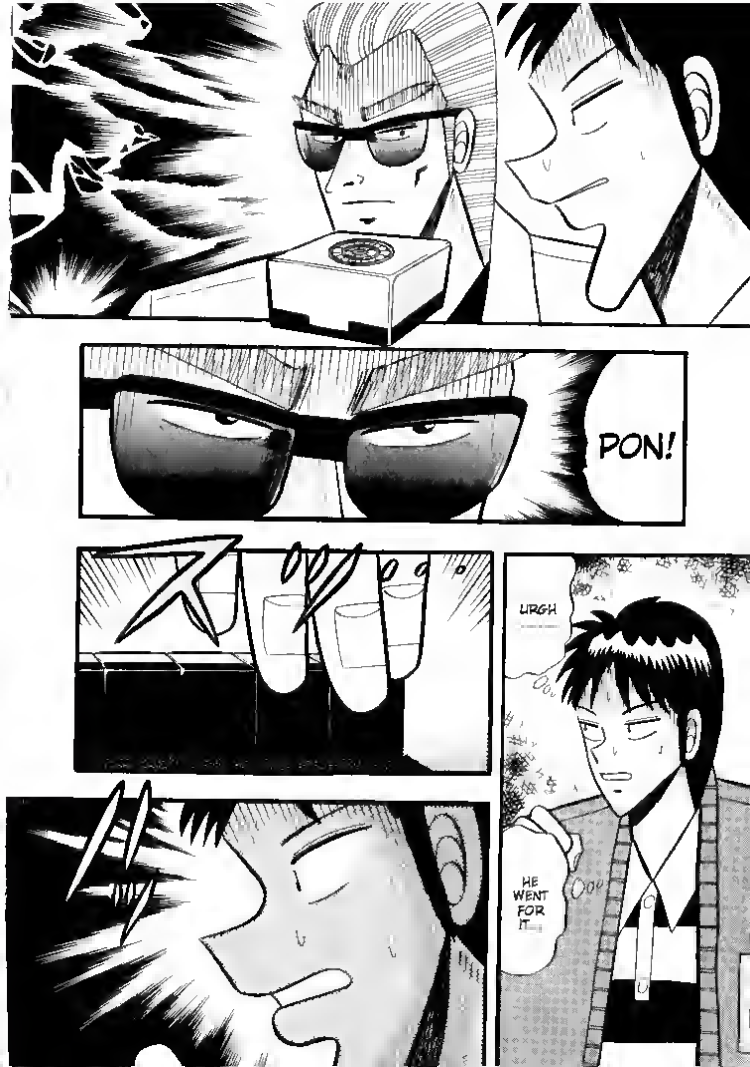

HARADA'S DISCARDS


THESE TWO 1-PIN COULD FATALLY SLOW DOWN MY HAND...
I DON'T WANT TO LET HIM CALL ON ANY PINZU BUT...

SO HARADA HAS IT TIED TO A PINZU HON-ITSU HAND TOO...
WITH ONLY THE CHUN, IT'S 1000 POINTS NOT ENOUGH FOR THE LEAD

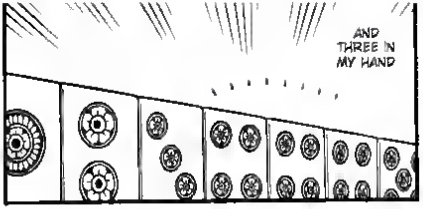

DON'T TAKE IT!

SHIT


PON!
URGH
HE WENT FOR IT

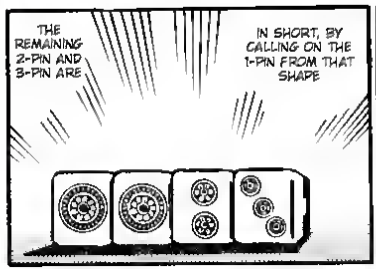
THAT HABIT OF HARADA'S THAT SHOWS WHEN HE CAN PON OR CHI! WITH THOSE TILES
THAT HAND MOVEMENT, WHEN HE LAID DOWN THE TILES FOR PON ON THE TABLE
IT SHOWED UP...!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HARADA'S SINGLE WEAK POINT SHOWED UP AT THE LAST MOMENT.....!
I'VE GOT HIM.....

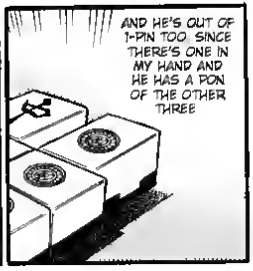
BUT WITH THAT CALL, HARADA MUST HAVE BEEN THE FIRST TO REACH TENPAI
THERE'S NO TIME FOR ME TO WASTE!
IT'S DESTINY .....!
IN THIS MATCH.....
IT CAN'T BE ANYTHING EXCEPT THIS SHAPE.....
THIS IS IT.....!
A SHAPE WHERE HE COULD PON OR CHII OFF THE 1-PIN
COME ON, THINK.....!
THIS ISN'T IT.....
IF IT WAS CONNECTED TO THE 4-PIN, HE COULD HAVE ENDLESS POTENTIAL FOR DIFFERENT WAITS, 1-4-7-PIN AND 2-5-PIN, BUT.....
PON
1-4-7-PIN AND 2-5-PIN WAIT

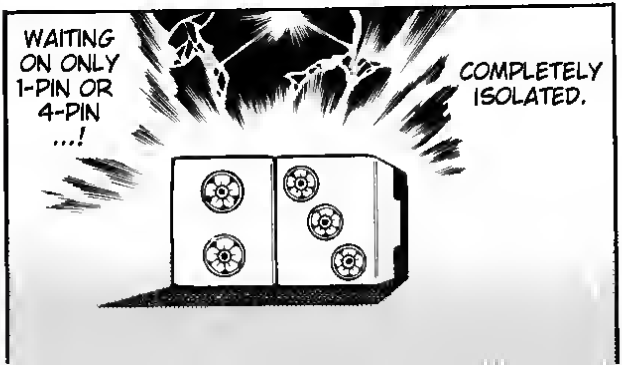

AND THREE IN MY HAND

THERE'S ONE ON THE TABLE

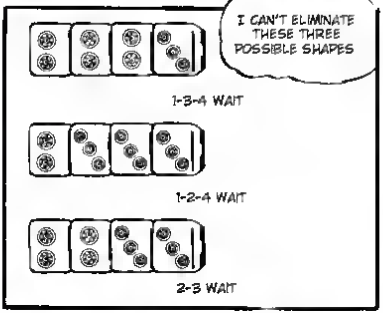
THERE CAN'T BE A 4-PIN IN HARADA'S HAND ..!
THE VITAL 4-PIN IS ALL USED UP


THE REMAINING 2-PIN AND 3-PIN ARE
IN SHORT, BY CALLING ON THE 1-PIN FROM THAT SHAPE

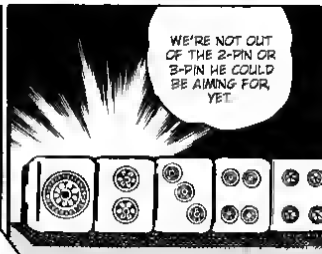

AND HE'S OUT OF 1-PIN TOO. SINCE THERE'S ONE IN MY HAND AND HE HAS A PON OF THE OTHER THREE

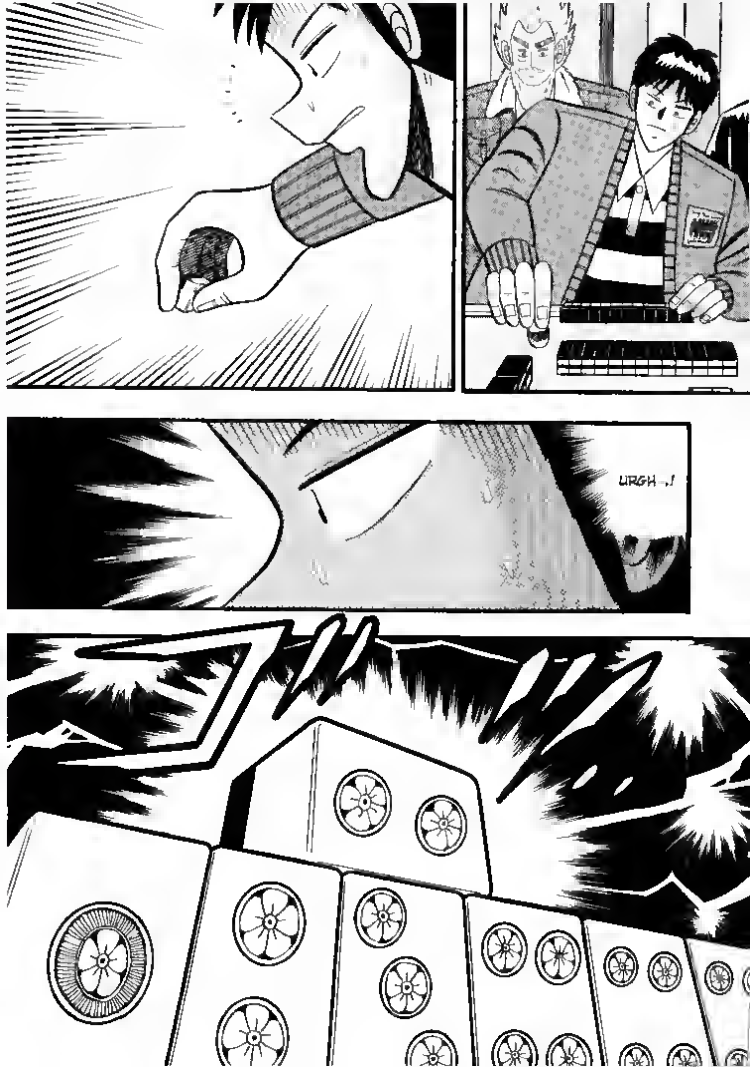

WAITING ON ONLY 1-PIN OR 4-PIN ...!
COMPLETELY ISOLATED.

NO
WAIT

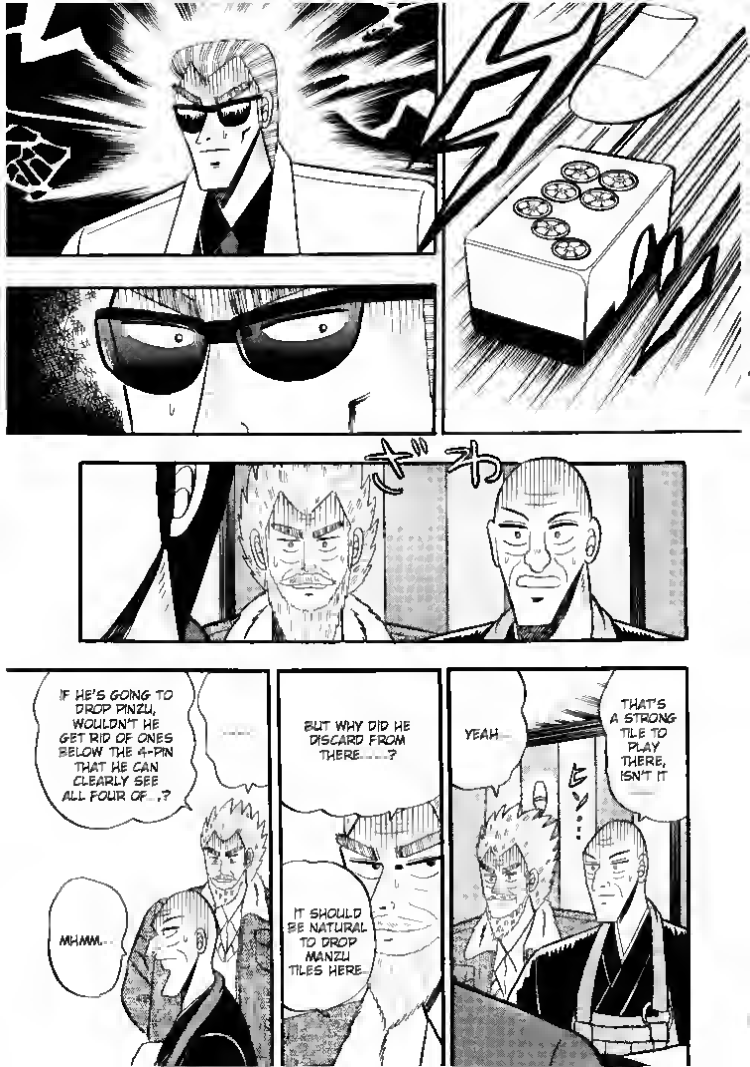

I CAN'T ELIMINATE THESE THREE POSSIBLE SHAPES
1-3-4 WAIT
1-2-4 WAIT
2-3 WAIT

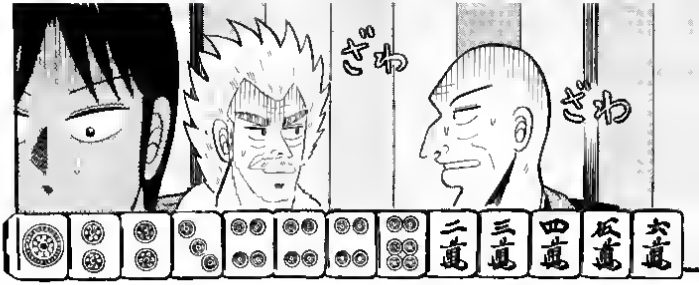
IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THAT SIMPLE
WHEN THE TILES ARE THAT IMPORTANT
FOR INSTANCE


WE'RE NOT OUT OF THE 2-PIN OR 3-PIN HE COULD BE AIMING FOR, YET.


URGH..!

WHAT THE HELL...!
二萬
三萬
四萬
伍萬
六萬
TO THINK THAT I WOULD DEAL INTO HIS HAND WHEN I CAN CLEARLY SEE HIS WAIT IS...
RIDIC-ULOUS...
IT'S ONLY THE 2-PIN AND 3-PIN THAT WE HAVEN'T RUN OUT OF YET.
IT'S THE WORST POSSIBLE DRAW...!
HUH?
SHIT...
二萬
三萬
四萬

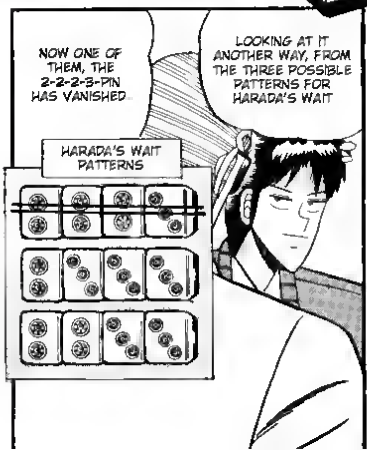

ぐわ
THAT'S A STRONG TILE TO PLAY THERE, ISN'T IT
YEAH...
ヒソ...
BUT WHY DID HE DISCARD FROM THERE.....?
IT SHOULD BE NATURAL TO DROP MANZU TILES HERE.
IF HE'S GOING TO DROP PINZU, WOULDN'T HE GET RID OF ONES BELOW THE 4-PIN THAT HE CAN CLEARLY SEE ALL FOUR OF...?
.....
MHMM...


さわ
さわ
二萬
三萬
四萬
伍萬
六萬

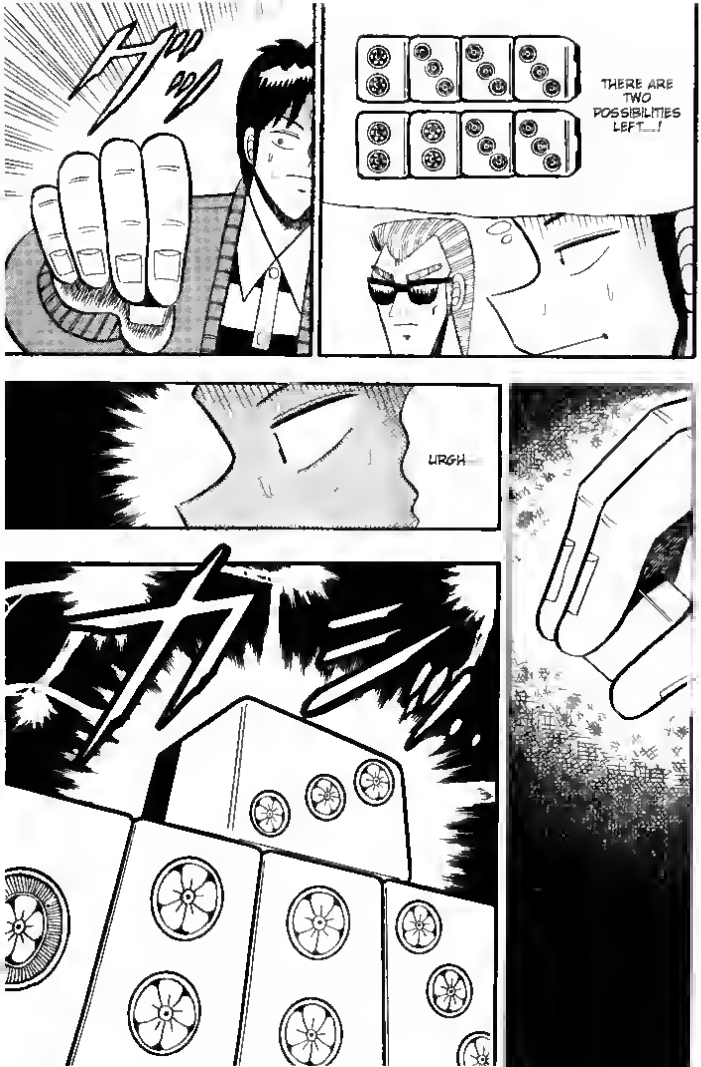
ANYTHING BEYOND THE TILES EXPOSED AND MY DISCARD OF THE 7-PIN...!
THE PEOPLE HERE DON'T KNOW

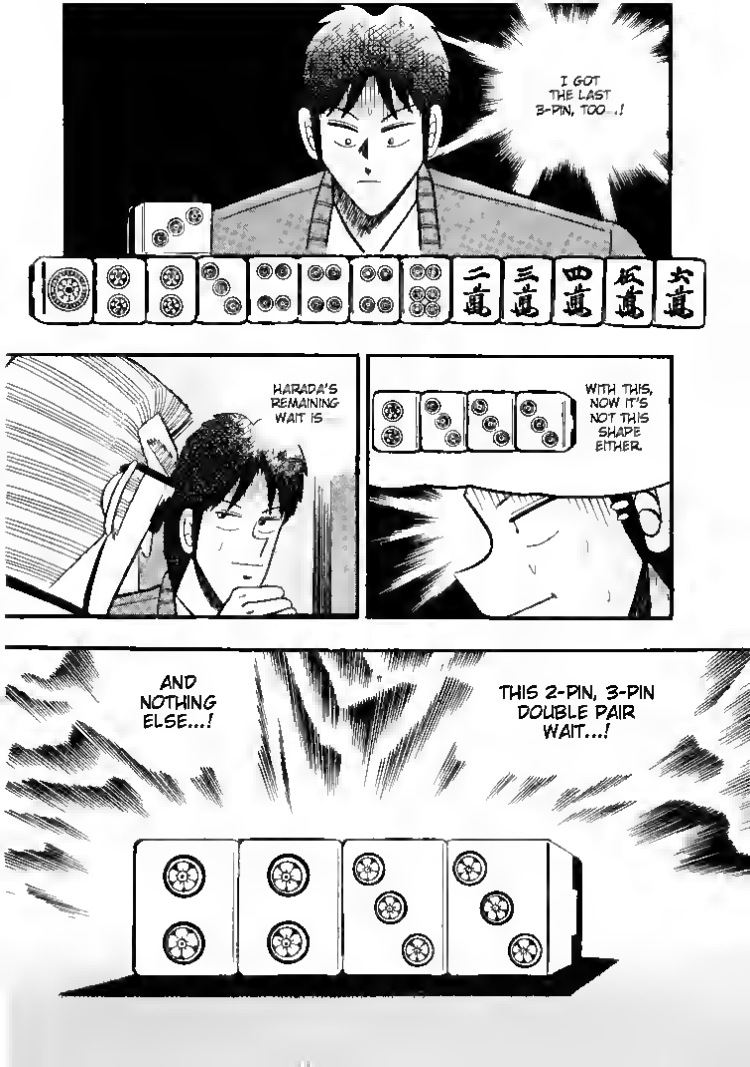
THIS IS THE LOGIC THAT STARTED WITH MY CONFIDENCE THAT HE HAD THE 2-PIN AND 3-PIN IN HIS HAND...
IT'S NOT IM-POSS-IBLE

HEH HEH IF EVERYONE'S SURPRISED


NOW ONE OF THEM, THE 2-2-2-3-PIN HAS VANISHED
LOOKING AT IT ANOTHER WAY, FROM THE THREE POSSIBLE PATTERNS FOR HARADA'S WAIT
HARADA'S WAIT PATTERNS

SINCE I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY OTHER TILES BEING ABLE TO PASS, I CAN EASILY AVOID DANGER THIS WAY...
I'M SURE THERE'S A BIG HINT THAT THE 2-PIN AND 3-PIN ARE IN HIS HAND
IT'S UNFORTUNATE TO HAVE TO KEEP THE 2-PIN BUT...


THERE ARE TWO POSSIBILITIES LEFT...!
URGH


I GOT THE LAST 3-PIN, TOO...!
二萬
三萬
四萬
伍萬
六萬
HARADA'S REMAINING WAIT IS
WITH THIS, NOW IT'S NOT THIS SHAPE EITHER.
AND NOTHING ELSE...!
THIS 2-PIN, 3-PIN DOUBLE PAIR WAIT...!

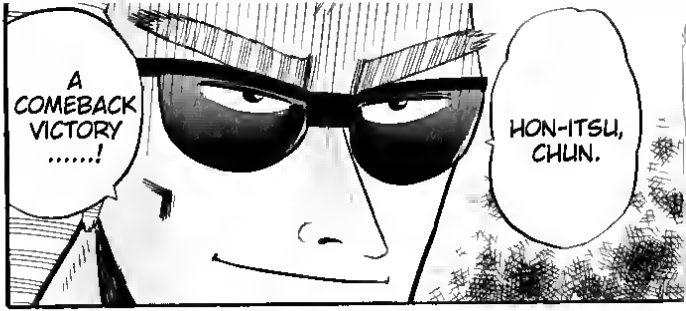
I'VE WON...!
BUT
I CAN COMPLETELY SUPPRESS THIS DOUBLE PAIR WAIT...!
WAITING ON MANZU TILES THAT WILL COME OUT EASILY
I'LL BE IN AN IDEAL 3-SIDED WAIT FOR PIN-FU
WHEN THIS 6-PIN PASSES
二萬
三萬
四萬
伍萬
六萬
I'VE WON THIS MATCH!
I'M 99% SURE.....
MEANWHILE, HARADA'S IN TENPAI THAT WILL NEVER WIN

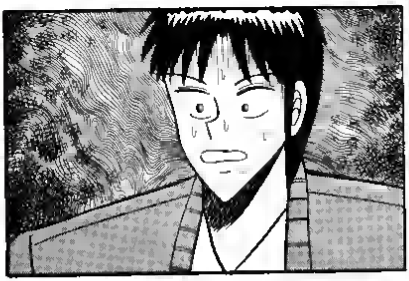
AGAIN, A STRONG TILE LIKE THAT
URGH

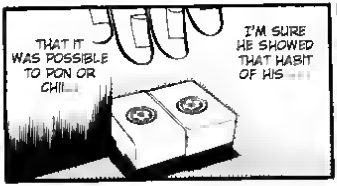
YEAH?
YOU MUST'VE GOTTEN SOMETHING GOOD TO WORK WITH?
KIDDO
HEH HEH

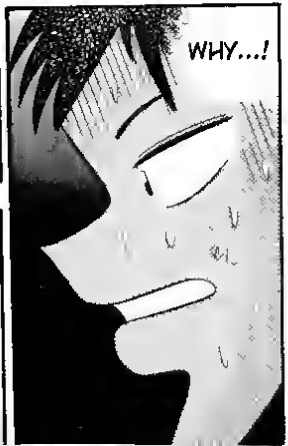
WHEN YOU GET CARRIED AWAY WITH YOUR OWN WILD IDEAS
YOU'RE GOING TO GET HURT.
NORMALLY, A PERSON WOULDN'T DISCARD
IN THAT AREA.
A PREDICTION
THERE'S EVIDENCE THAT LED TO ME DISCARDING THE 6-PIN AND 7-PIN
IT'S NOT A HUNCH
YOU CAN'T PICK UP A WIN ON A HUNCH
THEN YOUR PREDICTION MUST'VE BEEN OFF.
HEH HEH

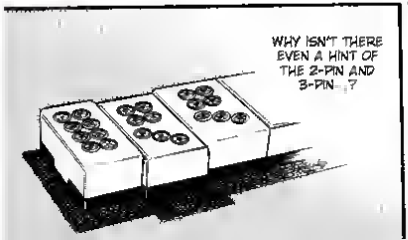
RON...!


A COMEBACK VICTORY .....!
HON-ITSU, CHUN.



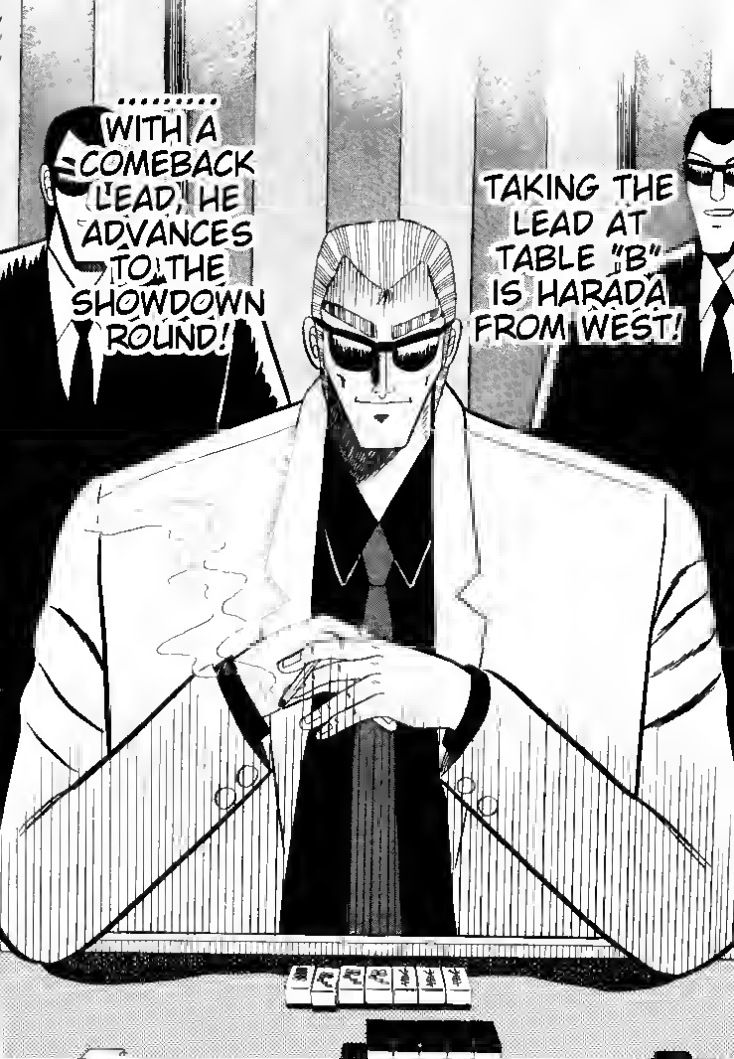

THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO PON OR CHII...
I'M SURE HE SHOWED THAT HABIT OF HIS...


WHY...!


WHY ISN'T THERE EVEN A HINT OF THE 2-PIN AND 3-PIN...?

HEH HEH
.....IF SO, THEN THAT PREDICTION .....
MUST HAVE BEEN OFF...

WAS A TRAP.....
THAT HABIT ITSELF
SHIT.....!
IT WAS A PLAN TO TRICK ME
HARADA WOULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING LIKE THAT
A HABIT OF LAYING THE TILES DOWN STRAIGHT FROM HIS HAND WHEN IT WAS POSSIBLE TO PON OR CHII
I'M NOWHERE NEAR A MATCH FOR HIM.....!
HE'S A CLASS ABOVE ME.....!


.....
WITH A COMEBACK LEAD, HE ADVANCES TO THE SHOWDOWN ROUND!
TAKING THE LEAD AT TABLE "B" IS HARADA FROM WEST!